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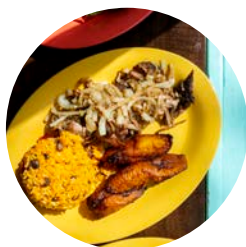
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EMPLOYEE, E-MAIL:
(FIRST INITIAL)(LAST NAME)
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PUBLISHER

TRACY BAIM

INTERIM EDITORS IN CHIEF

SUJAY KUMAR, KAREN HAWKINS

DEPUTY EDITOR KATE SCHMIDT

CREATIVE LEAD SUE KWONG

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY JAMIE RAMSAY

CULTURE EDITOR AIMEE LEVITT

MUSIC EDITOR PHILIP MONTORO

ASSOCIATE EDITOR JAMIE LUDWIG

SENIOR WRITERS DEANNA ISAACS,

BEN JORAVSKY, MIKE SULA

STAFF WRITERS MAYA DUKMASOVA, LEOR GALIL

GRAPHIC DESIGNER DAVON CLARK

SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR BRIANNA WELLEN

MUSIC LISTINGS COORDINATOR

SALEM COLLO-JULIN

FILM LISTINGS COORDINATOR PATRICK FRIEL

THEATER ASSIGNMENTS EDITOR CATEY SULLIVAN

CONTRIBUTORS NOAH BERLATSKY, DEVLYN CAMP,

DAVE CANTOR, LUCA CIMARUSTI, NINA LI COOMES,

CODY CORRALL, MARISSA DE LA CERDA, SHERI

FLANDERS, ISA GIALLORENZO, ANDREA GRONVALL,

KT HAWBAKER, JUSTIN HAYFORD, JACK HELBIG,

IRENE HSIAO, DAN JAKES, MONICA KENDRICK,

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LEAH PICKETT, KAT SACHS, KERRY REID, BEN SACHS,

DMITRY SAMAROV, LILLIAN STONE, ALBERT WILLIAMS

DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL JOHN DUNLEVY

DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & PROGRAMS

KRISTEN KAZA

OFFICE MANAGER S. NICOLE LANE

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DISTRIBUTION CONCERNS

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CONSULTANT CAROL E. BELL

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THIS WEEK ON CHICAGOREADER.COM



Movie Tuesday: Art imitating life

Ben Sachs introduces five capsule reviews from the Reader archives in which directors look at themselves via autobiographical stand-ins.

Making the news

Anya Davidson continues her comics series documenting the year-long, citywide event series *Chicago 1919: Confronting the Race Riots*.

Friends till the end

Read Leah Pickett's review of *Avengers: Endgame*, the three-hour Marvel blockbuster that will definitely not resurrect all those superheroes from *Infinity War*.

CITY LIFE



You can pack your marijuana-related record away by seeking out expungement 📷 TOPHER I/Flickr

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Clear your name

Free advice for sealing your public record

YOU MAY HAVE had a marijuana-related arrest, charge, or even sentence years ago and feel that your past is behind you. Perhaps you were arrested as a teenager for possession but never got charged. You may not realize that, unless you've gone through the process of having your records sealed or expunged, they are still public.

While there are laws in effect to prevent employers and landlords from discriminating against those with a criminal record, there are many reasons that one may want to have their records sealed or expunged. The core difference between “sealing” a record and “expunging” is that a sealed record will still exist and could be unsealed in specific legal situations. An expungement fully deletes the record of arrest or conviction from the archive. You may have to undergo a waiting period before you can start either process. Those whose arrests resulted in no charge or a dismissal could be eligible to start the process immediately after dismissal.

Several legal aid organizations in Chicago can help you navigate expungement. Illinois Legal Aid offers information about Illinois laws and procedures on their website.

You can also seek help from Cabrini Green Legal Aid in person at their help desk at the Daley Center (50 W. Washington, Room 1006) Monday-Thursday during limited hours. Be aware that help is available on a first-come,

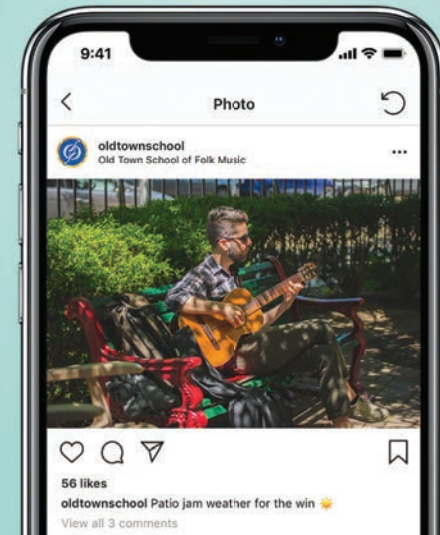
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first-served basis. Project Homecoming, a new effort from the Westside Justice Center, runs a hotline for previously incarcerated people and their families.

There's also a free summit coming up on June 1 hosted by Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court Dorothy Brown's office that promises volunteer lawyers who will provide counseling about your case and assist you with the beginning of the process. You must pre-register to attend. Marijuana may soon be legal in Illinois, but it's still a criminalized substance. —**SALEM COLLO-JULIN**

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FERAL CITIZEN

Fungus among us

Cramp balls, puffballs, and more friends in the woods

By NANCE KLEHM

Moving past the concrete barrier marked “CLOSED,” Patrick Leacock and I slipped and slid our way into the woods, quiet except for the hissing cars and occasional woodpecker. Species of maple, oak, poplar, elm, and wild cherry were present, as well as last year’s leaves in the duff below our feet. There were plenty of tree snags and fallen logs decomposing. It’s important to know species, as fungi have woody associates, meaning they identify and grow on or with particular trees, or “mothers” as I am wont to say. Some species prefer dying or dead wood, others are parasitic on the living ones. One can’t get away from tree identification when one is interested in looking for fungi. And that is what Patrick and I were doing on this dank cold day at the beginning of spring.

Patrick is a professional mycologist who works as a researcher, consultant, and teacher. As the president of the Illinois Mycological Association, he organizes lectures and leads fungal forays and field trips. He is also a field botanist who works with the herbarium collections at the Field Museum. He told me that his interest in birds as a young boy introduced him to the woods, and that led to an interest in plants, study and field work as a botanist, and then specializing in mycology.

Chicago was a swampy region with oak savannas, woodlands, and tall grass prairies, but we have done much to alter the microbial and terrestrial communities that were once here. Beyond concerns of real estate and agricultural development, the relationship between soil fungi and woodlands is an important one. Soils support what can live with them, and, when compromised in certain ways, what cannot.

Ecologically this woodland is considered degraded, nonprime, as are most of the land-

scapes that we live with, and containing an understory of wild currant, honeysuckle, and barberry—plants usually “managed” (sought and destroyed) by restorationists. We traced a narrow section of the Des Plaines River, the longest stream in the Chicago region, which was the western route used by native peoples to canoe from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi. We were 100 miles or so from where it begins, maybe 15 miles before it joins the industrial waters in the human-dug Sanitary and Ship Canal.

There were no footsteps of other humans, though plenty from deer. The sky was filled with naked branches, with only the maples flowering red. It was also not warm enough for fruiting mushrooms, just “the rotters,” as Patrick called them. Mushrooms are deeply relational and emerge from a complex living (or dying) context. They don’t “just happen.” As Michael Kuo, professional amateur mycologist, author of *Mushrooms of the Midwest*, and creator of mushroomexpert.com, writes: “It should be obvious that understanding mushrooms, therefore, depends on understanding the whole picture.”

When you are on a walk and discover a fungus, note the date and where it is found. Note the color, shape, and size. Does it have gills, pores, spines, or teeth? Is it in assemblage with others and how so? Or is it alone, identifying what it seems to be growing on or near (species of tree or terrestrial). Keys exist for mushrooms just like they do for plants and to learn how to use a key to identify a species is a useful skill. Fungi have their seasons like everything else.

In his backpack, Patrick carried a tackle box and large knife, a soft brush, a loupe, and a clipboard with a checklist he had printed from his own website. This month’s local checklist contained 94 species commonly found in the Chicago area.

During our walk we saw and checked off 16 species: the corky polypore fungus artist’s conk (*Ganoderma applanatum*), the medicinal bracket fungus turkey tail (*Trametes versicolor*), a few groupings of the fleshy and edible jelly fungus wood ears (*Auricularia angiospermanun*) and the black bubbly jelly fungus known as witches butter (*Exidia recisa*), some black and lustrous cramp balls (*Daldinia chiladeae*), and a tight chubby family of pear-shaped puffballs (*Lycoperdon pyriforme*) that formed last fall, still full of pea-green spores that I quickly poked to release their clouds into the air.



Turkey tail (*Trametes versicolor*) © NANCE KLEHM

I spotted a jelly fungus that looked like a turmeric-colored paint spill and Patrick collected it, as he couldn’t identify it. I watched him cut a long and wide strip of the specimen, including wings of the tree bark it was growing on, place it gently into his tackle box, and scribble down some notes. I casually asked him to let me know what he found out about the species. “I won’t have time to look at that specimen for a few years!” he quickly admonished me. Apparently, I had forgotten that I was walking with a very busy researcher and the discoverer of the Chicago chanterelle (*Cantharellus chicaoensis*).

There aren’t a lot of jobs for mycologists. Fungi have a pivotal role in soil and plant

health, including moisture regulation, carbon storage, and nutrient cycling in grasslands, forests, parklands, and backyards. And let us not forget their role as deathmongers. They are the only decomposers who can break down lignin (the woody structure of the tree), and they play a large role in fermentation and wellness, and as foods themselves. This makes one think that perhaps mycology would be greatly valued. But most of us weren’t taught about fungi (or lichens or mosses) in our biology or earth science classes. Or we were taught to be phobic of them.

As you can imagine, for over 35 years Patrick has kept meticulous data and has compiled detailed sheets of many of the 1,200 species found in the Chicago region. If you want to discover the role of fungi in the world and learn the characteristics of species commonly and not so commonly found in this area, join the Illinois Mycological Association on fungal forays, or attend the monthly meetings, which always feature fabulous presenters from the far-flung myco world. Appreciation of all things fungal is what this club is about.

On the drive home we talked about leading newbies on a mushroom foray or a plant forage and getting the same, sometimes annoying, question time and again: *Is it edible?* When I asked him his least favorite question, Patrick snorted and shook his head. When someone points at a fungus and asks “What’s it good for?” he said he bites his tongue and doesn’t utter his retort: “What are *you* good for?”

And that is the question we, as organisms in this ecosystem, could all be asking ourselves. 🍄

🐦 @NanceKlehm



Pear-shaped puffballs (*Lycoperdon pyriforme*) © NANCE KLEHM

NEWS & POLITICS



Mayor Rahm Emanuel gesticulating © DANIEL X. O'NEIL/Flickr

POLITICS

The aldermanic prerogative myth

Chicago would rather solve a phony problem than deal with a real one like the lack of affordable housing.

By BEN JORAVSKY

At the risk of getting myself boot-ed out of the Jaded Journalist Society—if such a body even exists—I'm going to do something I never thought I'd do.

I'm going to defend Chicago aldermen—or at least take exception to the developing movement against aldermanic prerogative.

This is the policy in which aldermen supposedly get the final say over zoning and land use issues in their wards on the grounds that—papa and mama know best. So shut up and do what we tell ya!

At the moment, aldermanic prerogative is cited as a source of corruption, underdevelopment, segregation, and pretty much everything else wrong with Chicago today, with the possible exception of the Cubs's propensity

for overpaying mediocre ballplayers with the proceeds they soak from the saps who show up to Wrigley game after game.

In time, I'm sure we'll devise a way to blame the Ricketts on aldermanic prerogative as well.

The list of dignitaries who have recently railed against aldermanic prerogative includes Mayor-elect Lori Lightfoot, Inspector General Joe Ferguson, and many of my dear friends of the progressive persuasion.

So you see, taking this stand wins me no love from anyone, except maybe an alderman or two.

That may come in handy should I have a late-in-life change of life and go to work for, say, Sterling Bay. Although the way they steamrolled the council into passing the ➔

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NEWS & POLITICS

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Lincoln Yards TIF scam, I'm starting to think the real problem in Chicago is Sterling Bay prerogative.

Anyway, I think the problem of aldermanic prerogative is greatly exaggerated. The policy itself exists only when the mayor allows it to. I defy Lightfoot, Ferguson, or anyone to give me one example of when aldermen—championing aldermanic prerogative as a rallying cry—voted against the mayor.

They won't cause they can't.

In contrast, there are several instances in which aldermen have thrown aldermanic prerogative out the window when ordered to do so by the mayor. Two weeks ago, 25th Ward alderman-elect Byron Sigcho-Lopez pleaded with aldermen not to approve the \$1.1 billion 78 TIF deal.

They did so anyway, even though the TIF project is targeted for Sigcho-Lopez's ward.

Want another example? In 2018, 42nd Ward alderman Brendan Reilly asked the council to vote against the \$5.5 million TIF handout to Presence Health, an antiabortion outfit. Mayor Rahm asked them to vote for the deal.

The aldermen went with Rahm. That was a twofer—they abandoned their principles about aldermanic prerogative and a woman's right to choose in one fell swoop.

I suspect the effort to make an issue out of something that does not really exist is the first step toward cutting the number of wards.

I'm against anything that would give even more power to our already too-powerful mayors. Unless of course the next mayor proves to be the second coming of Harold Washington. Then—more power to you.

Now we get to the issues raised by my progressive friends—the role of aldermanic prerogative in blocking efforts to build affordable housing.

In particular, 41st Ward alderman Anthony Napolitano used the issue to rally his colleagues to vote against an attempt to build 30 units of affordable housing out by O'Hare. (My colleague—the Marvelous Maya Dukmasova—has written several articles on this topic. I urge one and all to check them out.)

The fight for affordable housing and integration had been going on long before Napolitano came on the scene. In the years after World War II, efforts championed by Elizabeth Wood and Robert Taylor to integrate publicly funded housing on the southwest and southeast sides were greeted by white riots.

By the 1950s, Mayor Richard J. Daley realized he would face political insurrection from generally loyal Democratic white voters if he dared to promote integration in subsidized housing, so he backed off—not that he was so keen on the policy in the first place.

And mayors have been backing off on integration and affordable housing ever since, especially Mayor Richard M. Daley and Mayor Rahm.

So, yes, Napolitano used aldermanic prerogative to rally other aldermen to his anti-affordable housing cause. And it worked.

But ask yourself this—what would have happened had Mayor Rahm stood up for affordable housing? You know, if he'd done the right thing—for once in his mayoral life.

Would the other aldermen have sided with Rahm as they did with Presence and the 78?

My guess is yes. But, we'll never know. Affordable housing is just one of the many issues Rahm refused to stick out his neck for—along with taking a stand against corruption by fighting to remove Alderman Ed Burke as chair of the finance committee.

Why would a politician as practical as Rahm do something as impractical as taking a principled stand on affordable housing? It would not buy him much leverage in the council. If, for instance, he successfully lobbied the council to defy Napolitano on those 30 units, it would be harder for Rahm to extract Napolitano's vote on something he really wants. Like, just to pick one recent example, the \$2.4 billion-dollar handouts for the Lincoln Yards and 78 projects.

By the way, Napolitano voted yes on both of those TIF deals—even though they'll jack up property taxes throughout the city, including Edison Park, and Forest Glen, and all the other communities in the 41st Ward.

If this keeps up, the 41st Ward will be unaffordable to the folks who voted for Napolitano.

Bottom line, the real issue here isn't aldermanic prerogative—it's Mayor Rahm's aversion to affordable housing.

And yet I suspect Napolitano's crusade against those 30 units will be cited by many as another reason we should do away with aldermanic prerogative.

That's so Chicago, Chicagoans. We've got one problem that's very real and another that's exaggerated. Guess which one our leaders will "solve" first. 

 @joravben

NEWS

How to get rid of a CPS principal

The quest to fire Ogden International's leader exposes flaws in the disciplinary mechanism.

By MAYA DUKMASOVA



BOBBY SIMS

Five months since CPS removed Dr. Michael Beyer, the principal of Ogden International School, from his position, he's still getting paid but can't return to work.

As the *Reader* reported in November, CPS justified Beyer's removal with the findings of an Office of Inspector General investigation that concluded in June 2018. The heavily redacted OIG report, which was released to the public, cited "75 instances" over the course of three school years "where students were temporarily unenrolled and re-enrolled within the same school year," or coded as transfers during prolonged absences. The OIG claimed that Beyer knew about and directed these falsifications. Though the OIG admitted they were "unable to determine" how these improper codings impacted the school's attendance rate, the report nevertheless stated that "the OIG believes that Ogden perpetuated this unenrollment and transfer practice to manipulate the attendance numbers and protect Ogden's SQR." (The School Quality Rating Policy

judges and ranks schools by several factors, including attendance rates.) Since November, Beyer has also faced new allegations of mishandling student data.

Beyer's removal from Ogden came at a pivotal moment, as the K-12, 1,700-student, two-campus school based in the Gold Coast and West Town merged with Cabrini-Green-based Jenner Elementary this school year. The merger consolidated the overcrowded Ogden, which serves a largely well-heeled, international community, with the under-enrolled Jenner, whose student body of about 215 was majority Black and low-income.

Beyer and his allies argue that his removal is indicative of long-standing problems with how CPS disciplines principals, especially those who bring negative attention on district officials. They also say his case raises questions about the integrity and independence of the OIG. The full context of Beyer's legal situation is Dickensian in its procedural complexity and Kafkaesque in its logic—so much so that conspiracy theories abound about what's

really going on. But its implications for the fate of the school are perhaps more important. Ogden, according to the accounts of parents, students, and community members, has experienced instability that threatens not only the fate of the merger but the future possibility of others like it.

CPS officials never explained why, having had the OIG's report since June, they'd only moved to fire Beyer in November. But this wasn't the first time he'd gotten in trouble with the district.

An outspoken and often polarizing leader, Beyer was issued a "warning resolution" in January 2016 over an e-mail he'd sent to state legislators that appeared critical of CPS ("Public education in Illinois, and especially in Chicago, seems chaotic and unplanned," Beyer had written to fellow members of a state task force on high-stakes testing) and a post on Facebook inviting Ogden parents to help clean up the school. Beyer was cited for insubordination to his supervisor and unbecoming conduct and given vague "directives for improvement," among them: follow all district rules, don't speak out publicly against the district or its leadership, and don't be insubordinate.

Beyer claims that in the two years following this warning resolution his district bosses routinely "threatened to have me removed for even the slightest alleged infractions that they perceived, creating a hostile work environment." (CPS didn't respond to the *Reader's* request for comment about this allegation.)

Over the course of the 2017-2018 school year, Beyer and the late Jenner principal Rob Croston worked together on the complicated and at times contentious merger of their schools. It was April of 2018 when investigators from the OIG's office first contacted Beyer's staff with questions about attendance records.

News of the attendance fraud and Beyer's removal came as a shock to many in the Ogden community, especially since his contract had just been renewed by the local school council in August. Others, who'd been unhappy with his leadership style and had long accused him of dismissive and improper treatment, expressed joy at his departure. While there were plenty of people who either loved or hated Beyer, there appeared to be consensus that a midyear removal of a principal managing a school merger was disruptive and showed poor planning by CPS when they clearly could have made that decision as early as June.

In the information vacuum, speculation and

conspiracy theories proliferated: maybe the mayor's office wanted to tank the success of the Ogden/Jenner merger by pressuring CPS to remove Beyer, thereby making it less likely that a rich and poor school would merge in the future? Maybe CPS wanted to clean house of any principals who raised red flags for any reason in the wake of the sexual abuse scandal uncovered by the *Tribune* in the summer of 2018? Maybe CPS CEO Janice Jackson was cracking down and following the OIG's recommendations to improve her chances of staying in her job under a new mayor? Maybe CPS was finally heeding complaints from parents who'd been unhappy with Beyer's leadership? Maybe this is just how slowly district bureaucracy works?

Whatever the reason, according to the OIG's annual report released in January the attendance record falsification investigation at Ogden was spurred by one of 24 such complaints the office logged in 2018. That year, the OIG only recommended discipline for two principals it investigated in conjunction with such allegations: Beyer and the former principal of Burke Elementary school in Washington Park. (Burke had been the source of negative news for CPS in the spring of 2018, with both the dirty school and special education scandals.)

When CPS wants to fire a principal under contract he or she has the right to have a formal termination hearing at which CPS has to present evidence and arguments to justify the dismissal. These evidentiary hearings are presided over by an arbitrator and follow state board of education rules. However, before the termination hearing, the district can suspend the principal without pay by holding a "pre-suspension" hearing overseen by a district staffer (rather than a neutral third party).

After he was removed from Ogden, Beyer's lawyers prepared for his pre-suspension hearing. CPS ignored their requests for a list of rules the hearing officer would be following to make her decision and denied them the unredacted OIG report, citing student confidentiality concerns. Beyer's lawyers immediately filed a lawsuit in Cook County Circuit Court claiming his due process rights had been violated. Because principals are government employees with a property right to their pay, and the U.S. Constitution says that the government can't deprive people of life, liberty, or property without due process, CPS has more legal hurdles to clear than a private-sector employer before firing someone. The judge ➔



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issued an injunction staying any decisions by the CPS hearing officer from going into effect until she could review it for constitutional violations.

Pre-suspension hearings typically happen in one day. Chicago Principals and Administrators Association president Troy LaRaviere refers to them as “kangaroo courts,” because, he said, the hearings almost always result in suspension without pay and principals don’t usually get to examine the evidence against them or to mount a defense. (Indeed, accord-

ing to CPS, of the ten contract principals who faced dismissal in the last five years, seven were suspended in the last five years, seven were suspended before a suspension decision was issued, and one was terminated without a pre-suspension hearing because they never requested a termination hearing.)

But after the Cook County judge got involved, CPS scheduled three dates for Beyer’s pre-suspension hearing and allowed him to bring witnesses, including parents who’d unenrolled children for family travel to testify that he’d never instructed them to do so. On

the first day of the hearing (November 15), CPS’s hearing officer admitted that there were no written rules for the proceedings. Beyer’s lawyers reported this to the circuit court judge. After the second day of the hearing (December 6)—at which Beyer presented more witnesses in his defense—the parties went back before the county judge. CPS finally agreed to provide Beyer’s legal team with the unredacted OIG report and subsequently cancelled the third day of the pre-suspension hearing.

Meanwhile, preparations for Beyer’s formal termination hearing were still ongoing (these

hearings can take months to arrange and are planned at the same time as the district undertakes the suspension process). The arbitrator is selected from a CPS-approved list, but the principal has a right to participate in this selection if she wishes—provided she pays for half of the arbitrator’s fees. For this and other reasons, LaRaviere said termination hearings are still far from fair. He added that another problem is that principals are so often suspended without pay that they rarely see cases through to the termination hearing—still employed by the district and therefore ➔

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NEWS & POLITICS

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barred from getting another job, many resign in the face of months without pay. Many can't afford lawyers, or fees for the arbitrator. (Beyer has been able to fight the district in large part because his attorneys have taken his case pro bono—and because he's still getting paid.)

A few days before the new year, CPS publicly accused Beyer of improperly transmitting confidential employee and student information, including test scores and special education status, through a Google Drive folder that was shared with Ogden LSC members. In a letter to Ogden parents about the data

breach, CPS's chief education officer LaTanya McDade wrote that "the settings Dr. Beyer enabled on the folder made the information available to anyone who was provided a link to the folder." She added that an unnamed "community member received a copy of the e-mail containing the link as part of a CPS response to a Freedom of Information Act request" and that this person subsequently posted the link on their website and may have shared it "via other electronic means." Beyer has since argued that the Google Drive folder contained some files which he shared with the LSC to help them decide whether to renew his contract last summer, and that it never contained

employee or student information. Several members of the Ogden LSC have also submitted written statements to CPS confirming that he'd never shared sensitive information with them through the Google Drive.

Beyer's lawyers didn't hear from the district again until January 24, when CPS issued never-before-seen rules for the pre-suspension hearing process and announced they were reopening a pre-suspension hearing on both the attendance fraud and the new data breach charges. The hearing rules said, among other things, that neither CPS nor the employee facing suspension may force the other side to present evidence or witnesses and that CPS's ultimate suspension decision couldn't be appealed. Beyer's new pre-suspension hearing was scheduled for January 31.

"After you tried a case and you're about to lose you can't go back and change the rules to try to win," said William J. Quinlan, a lead attorney at The Quinlan Law Firm, which is representing Beyer. He said the newfangled pre-suspension hearing rules appeared to preempt their defense maneuvering. "It shows the zeal with which they want to fire Michael."

On January 31 the CPS hearing officer didn't allow Beyer's lawyers to call any witnesses to defend him on either the record falsification or the data breach charges. A week later CPS decided to suspend Beyer without pay. If not for the Cook County judge's injunction on all of their pre-suspension hearing decisions, he would have been. The judge is expected to rule on whether the suspension can go into effect at the end of April. Planning for Beyer's termination hearing is still ongoing.

Since he got his hands on the unredacted OIG report, Beyer has been busy researching the cited unenrollment cases. In March, Beyer and I met at a north side Chipotle. The normally clean-shaven, suited-up principal came dressed down in athleisure, with a stubble beard and cotton wool protruding from his left ear due to a recent surgery. He brought a clear plastic file box stuffed with papers from which he pulled out a spreadsheet.

Beyer wouldn't show me the names of the children and families identified in the unredacted report, but he explained that of the 75 instances of improper unenrollment over the course of three school years, there were just 41 unique students. Many of them were siblings, so in total the report concerned just 33 families, all from the elementary school. Beyer obtained written statements from five of them, accounting for 11 of the improperly

coded attendance cases. He said all of those families confirmed that they'd never been interviewed by the OIG's investigators, that temporarily unenrolling their students from Ogden was their own decision, and that Beyer didn't encourage them to do so.

On the second page of Beyer's spreadsheet was a detailed breakdown of the effect of the improperly coded attendance records on the school's overall attendance rate. Since the OIG couldn't determine what effect the alleged fraud had on Ogden's attendance rating, Beyer said he wanted to do the math himself to prove he and his staff couldn't have been scheming to game the SQR. P.

According to official CPS reports, in the 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18 school years when the 75 cited cases happened, Ogden Elementary's SQR. P. attendance rating was 95.4 percent, 95.2 percent, and 95.7 percent, respectively. (In its report the OIG indicated slightly lower overall attendance percentages based on "Dashboard"—CPS's raw data hub, while the district itself adjusts raw numbers to make sure schools aren't penalized for factors such as students' medical absences.)

To receive the highest rating for attendance, the SQR. P. requires an elementary school to have a minimum rate of 96 percent average daily attendance. The next rung down in the attendance rating is 95 percent. If all the Ogden students who had been unenrolled or marked as transferred had been marked as absent, the school's SQR. P. rating would have fallen by 0.23 percent, 0.13 percent, and 0.26 percent in each of the three school years, according to Beyer's calculations. This would not have brought Ogden's attendance rate below the 95 percent threshold in any of the three years. "So why would we cheat?" Beyer said.

He was indignant that the OIG didn't do the math to show the effect of the 75 cases on Ogden's attendance rating while accusing Beyer and his staff of willfully committing fraud to game the rating. "They have the data. Either one: they're lazy, two: they don't know what they're talking about, or three: they don't want to say that this didn't affect our rating."

CPS's inspector general Nicholas Schuler declined to answer questions about the investigation, citing pending litigation and disciplinary proceedings. "Our office has full confidence in its investigation and summary report," Schuler wrote in an e-mail.

A part of Beyer would have been happy to be officially fired long ago, he said with a grim laugh. But he said he can't bring himself to drop his battle against the district and give

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up hope that he might still return to Ogden. “I want to clear my name,” he said. “And I do care about the merger.”

Sandeep Soorya and his wife were “totally surprised” to read the redacted OIG report and see between the blacked-out lines that their family’s situation was referenced, especially since they were never contacted by investigators. His son and daughter go to Ogden. In December 2017, the family prepared for a long-anticipated trip to India to visit his wife’s relatives and observe a religious holiday. Their kids, then in sixth and third grade, would have to miss two weeks of school.

Soorya reached out to Beyer “and asked him how we should handle this so we don’t penalize our children and the school,” he explained. He and his wife worried that if their son accrued too many absences he wouldn’t be able to participate in extracurricular activities. “[Beyer] said ‘Don’t travel during the school year.’ He told us that there’s no way around it: ‘You’re gonna be penalized and the school is gonna be penalized.’”

But not going was not an option. It had taken Soorya, who has a Pakistani passport, years to get a visa to India. This felt like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Soorya said they talked to other families at the school with similar circumstances—diplomats, immigrants, and business people who sometimes had to go abroad for long periods of time. “They told us they disenrolled their children during times of travel,” he said. The Sooryas did the same.

Soorya’s wife testified in Beyer’s support at one of the December pre-suspension hearings. Even when they heard the news of the data breach later, it didn’t shake their confidence in him. “It was like they were piling on another allegation to justify letting Principal Beyer go,” Soorya said, adding that the school has taken a turn for the worse since his departure.

There’ve been reports of frequent fights at the middle school campus, which is in the old Jenner Elementary building. In mid-February, a staffer was arrested following a physical altercation with a 12-year-old student. Later that month acting principal Rebecca Bancroft e-mailed parents about changes to between-class hallway movement to “reduce unstructured student transition time.” Soorya said his son and his friends reported feeling scared in school.

Things have calmed down somewhat and the Sooryas hope that their son can still finish middle school at Ogden, but they’ve decided to

send their daughter, who’ll be starting middle school next year, to a private school. “CPS lost touch with our community,” he said. Though his family was supportive of the merger, the way this school year has unfolded has made him think that CPS couldn’t be trusted to pull off such a complicated social operation. “You can’t pull the leader of a school out and expect a merger to go through,” he said.

The Sooryas, of course, don’t speak for all 2,000 families at Ogden. “I think regardless of who’s the leader that merger is going to be challenging and it’ll take time to get things going smoothly,” said Lloyd Hervey II, the parent of a second-grader and LSC member. Plenty of people are still satisfied with the school, others were unhappy with Beyer’s leadership long before he was accused of any wrongdoing by CPS, and still others were and remain skeptical of the merger.

To Naajidaah Jones, the mother of a second-grader who’d previously gone to Jenner, Beyer’s removal didn’t exacerbate any concerns she didn’t already have. She said she never felt at home at Ogden. “Beyer had a very standoffish demeanor,” she said, and the curriculum and disciplinary expectations haven’t taken the needs of Black kids into account. “There are no Black teachers, what does that say to Black students?”

Jones wasn’t surprised to learn of tensions at the middle school. “Although we come from up the street from one another we’re at two different ends of the spectrum,” she said of the Ogden and Jenner communities. “It’s a class thing, it’s a culture thing, and a race thing too . . . A lot of young people are already hormonal and going through their own stuff so to have to integrate with these people they don’t have any connection to—it’s a culture shock.”

Jones plans to enroll her son in a different school next year—an independent private school with an Afrocentric curriculum.

Whatever ultimately happens to Beyer’s employment or the current parents’ enrollment decisions, the merger is here to stay. And the questions these last few months have raised—about how CPS deals with problem principals, the reliability of the OIG, and how best to reconcile the competing needs of radically different CPS communities—will remain.

CPS spokesman Michael Passman issued a brief statement for this story, reiterating the OIG’s findings and adding that “the district agrees with the OIG’s independent assessment that Dr. Beyer failed to act with professional integrity and should be removed from his position. The removal of Dr. Beyer was necessary

to promote a healthy school environment, and we are committed to providing students, parents, and staff with the support they need to ensure the merger of Jenner and Ogden continues to be a success.”

LaRaviere, who was himself removed from his principalship at Blaine Elementary in 2016 after publicly criticizing the district and the mayor, said the CPAA is now collecting information about other principals who’ve faced possibly unlawful terminations and is considering a class action lawsuit. So far they’ve gathered details on about 40 principals “who have been fired, forced to resign,

harassed—people who have said that they’ve left under duress,” since 2011. Beyer’s case may be a landmark because his legal team’s maneuvering created an extensive paper trail of inconsistencies in the district’s disciplinary procedures. But why should we care about how CPS principals are fired?

“Because,” LaRaviere said, “stable leadership is a huge factor in whether or not these schools are going to be able to give those kids what they need to realize their God-given potential.”

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The goats of Austin

They live at GlennArt Farm, a working farm, yoga studio, and community hub.

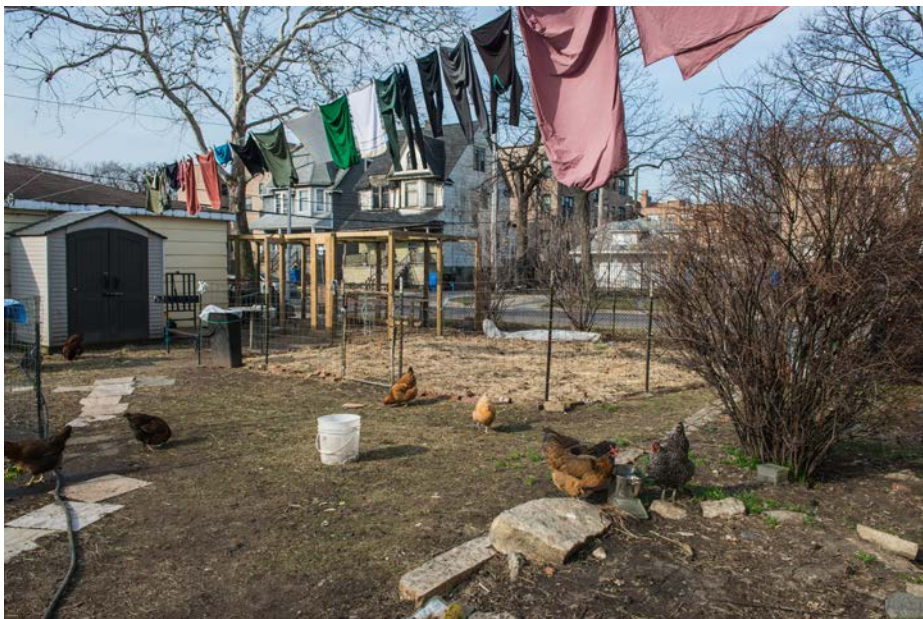
By LILLIAN STONE

It's a cold Sunday morning in March, and I'm hovering over two newborn goat kids with a hair dryer. The kids—one black, one white—came as a surprise, the product of an unsanctioned goat romance, and we have to get them warm and dry if they're going to survive the lingering Chicago winter. Hunched over next to me is Carolyn Ioder, who owns GlennArt Farm alongside her husband, David, a retired Chicago Public Schools teacher. Carolyn wipes her brow and pushes a space heater closer to the smaller kid, who is having trouble latching for his first gulp of milk. For me, this is an unusual Sunday. For the Ioders, it's just another one of the delightful and disarming moments they've come to expect after nine seasons of urban goat farming a few blocks west of the Central Green Line stop.

GlennArt Farm operates out of the Ioders' home (built from a Sears kit in 1909) on West Midway Park, a picturesque street in the racially taut space between South Austin and Oak Park. They bought the home, Carolyn says, because of Midway Park's old-school neighborhood feel. "Streets like Midway Park are hard to find these days," she says. However, when the Ioders moved in, they found themselves situated between two dramatically different neighborhoods that rarely intersected. Oak Park is a land of cobblestone sidewalks and high-priced natural grocery stores; meanwhile, according to the *Sun-Times*, Austin saw 180 homicides in 2018, more than 30 percent of the Chicago Police Department's reported homicides for the year. Oak Park residents have a median household income of \$87,402, while more than 40 percent of Austin households make less than \$25,000 a year, according to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.



From left: My Shadow was born on GlennArt Farm on March 10; Carolyn Ioder holds My Shadow and his sister, Mia; their mother, Emma, stands atop a bale of hay for a nursing reprieve from her hungry daughter. JAMIE RAMSAY



Clockwise from left: chickens graze in the backyard; Ioder milks Emma; the goats line up for banana peels, one of their favorite snacks 🍌 JAMIE RAMSAY

Admittedly, when I booked my room at GlennArt for a two-month sublet through Airbnb's extended-stay function, I thought I was staying in ritzy Oak Park. I needed a temporary home during my relocation from Springfield, Missouri, to Chicago, and an urban goat farm sounded like the perfect destination for my Boston terrier and me. I'm one of four other long-term guests living at the Ioder home, and we spend our evenings swapping jokes and playing Rummikub. I'm comfortable here, but when I tell people I live in South Austin, I'm met with raised eyebrows and told to stay away from the Central Green Line station. I get it: I'm a stocky white woman with a chirpy voice, and the Central station has a reputation. Still, I wonder if the bearers of those well-meaning warnings have ever

actually ventured to the west side. There's a community here—a community the Ioders hope to strengthen with their unorthodox tourist attraction.

Carolyn and David are both the products of several generations of midwestern farmers, which is why Carolyn decided to launch the farm as a side project while homeschooling their son, Arthur. She had her hands full with chickens and bees, but soon she began looking for new ways to make the farm more financially viable. "David caught me looking at Craigslist at goats for sale," she says, laughing. Soon enough, she had acquired two pregnant Saanen goats. Carolyn placed the goats in a 20-by-20-foot enclosure in the privately owned community garden at the eastern end of Midway Park, working with community gar-



den representatives and a private landowner to ensure a smooth transition. There was a steep learning curve. "We had no institutional memory of keeping animals in the city at all," she says. "It took me a month and a half to grow the grasses in their original enclosure. They ate it in one day."

The average full-sized adult goat consumes about 14 pounds of food per day, most of which takes the form of hay, grass, or another grazing material. Now the Ioders manage a herd of nine goats—including the two surprise kids, who are doing just fine—along with a flock of laying hens, four cats, and a friendly dog named Jack. They feed their herd with the help of donated produce hauls from several area groceries and food co-ops.

The hauls help the farm manage costs, but they also serve as a major boon to the neighborhood. The first time Carolyn received a produce haul from the Oak Park Whole Foods, the store threw in a massive amount of untouched goods including orange juice and cut fruit. Now Carolyn has an agreement with area groceries: She takes what they don't want, whether that be slightly damaged containers of orange juice or day-old pastries. Then she sends out twice-weekly texts to a group of 14 neighborhood residents who need the food, either for personal use or to distribute to other food-insecure households. The food recipients include Patrick Daniels, a program manager with local nonprofit UCAN. Headquartered on the west side, UCAN supports at-risk youth and families, providing trauma therapy, em-

ployment assistance, and academic encouragement. Daniels regularly picks up nutritious food for program participants as well as baked goods to celebrate birthdays. Daniels calls the west side home, and he sees a positive tide turning in the neighborhood. "People here have giving spirits," he says.

Bonni McKeown, a blues musician who lives up the street, agrees. "This is a nice place to be if you're having a tough time. This stuff helps," she says, gesturing to the two tote bags she's filled with cheese, olives, produce, and croissants.

I met Bonni on a Friday during one of the Ioders' food pickup days. She and I sat down with Harry Roundtree, who had scored a hunk of Whole Foods goat cheese to sauté with beans. Roundtree has been in the neighborhood since 1985, raising his two children here while working as a jail chaplain and a community activist. "Back in those days, we'd have cab drivers come in and drop dope off in the alley behind my house," Roundtree says. Now, he says, the street activity isn't as bad thanks to the influx of social media—dealers conduct business over Instagram, and pickups have moved indoors. However, while social media has reduced blatant drug exchanges on his block, he says it's also diminished the neighborhood's community feel. "People don't get out anymore like they used to," he says, reminiscing about the old days of stoop sitting. "The sense of being a human being has changed now." Still, Roundtree tries to connect with his fellow west siders. "I'll walk by a liquor store in the neighborhood, and the young men outside call me Pops," he says. For Roundtree, GlennArt isn't just a place to stock up on healthy food—it's a place to socialize. After our chat, he greets another farm regular who goes only by Miss Thomas. He pulls out a chair so she can relax for a few minutes. "God bless you, Miss Thomas," he says.

The Ioders also sell the fruits of their labor—goat milk, goat cheese, fresh eggs, and the like—to their fellow west siders, who order the products online and pick them up at the farm. For some families, it's a way to access healthy, responsibly-farmed food without trekking to Oak Park, where markups at Whole Foods and Pete's Fresh Market are high.

Despite the farm's noble aspirations, urban goat farming presents several unique challenges. "Goats are meant for mountains," Carolyn says, pointing out that the soft and spongy Illinois ground can wreak havoc on sensitive hooves. Then there's the lack of space. The Ioders have had to get creative, forging relationships with neighborhood landowners who allow the goats to graze on ➔

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their unoccupied lots. The Ioders also have an agreement with the nearby Garfield Park Conservatory, where the goats graze in the summer months. The system has required a fair amount of negotiation with local government officials, including 29th Ward alderman Chris Taliaferro. Those government relationships are key to endeavors like the Ioders' recent proposal to waive neighborhood landowners' mowing requirements, which would allow the goats to munch on the overgrown lots.

Funding is another issue. 2018 marked the farm's first profitable year, the result of GlennArt's hugely popular goat yoga classes. During the classes, yoga practitioners head to a nearby goat pasture to enjoy an hour-long vinyasa flow alongside the curious goat kids, who have been known to hop onto students' backs during floor poses. For the Ioders, the classes are more than an income source: they're a means to bring visitors into South Austin, breaking the so-called "Green Line stigma" and stimulating the local economy.

Unfortunately, the success of these urban agriculture operations are often met with resistance. Take, for example, the Root-Riot community garden at the east end of Midway Park. The garden's lot is currently owned by an out-of-state landowner; however, if it changes hands and the new landowner chooses to develop the space, the garden may have to cease operations. Garden stakeholders are currently partnering with NeighborSpace, a nonprofit urban land trust, to purchase the land (the group takes donations at neighbor-space.org). The group has until August to come up with \$70,000, and they're optimistic. Still, it's an example of the constant push and pull faced by practitioners of urban agriculture.

Despite its challenges, GlennArt Farm seems to have activated the neighborhood's underlying community spirit. For Carolyn, the secret to the farm's success lies in community support in the form of traveling volunteers, curious neighborhood kids, and previously incarcerated farm employees. The latter two groups often use the farm as a means of income and a way to enter—or reenter—the job market.

Getting dirty on the farm can also be an escape from the often-harsh realities of life on the west side. That's the case for Kamari, a 13-year-old who lives across the street and is going on her third year helping out on the farm. A lifelong Austin resident, Kamari has mixed feelings about the neighborhood. "Every other week, there's somebody getting shot," she says. She finds that working with animals helps her cope with the anxiety that



can accompany life in Austin. It's also a way for her to connect with a side of nature that some may see as intimidating. "I just love animals," she says. "I want people to know that animals aren't vicious. Like, sometimes, people are scared of the goats or think they're harmful, but I want people to know that most animals aren't harmful."

Kamari is one of the dozens of individuals who've used the farm as a stress relief tool over the years. "Animals bring out a need for repetition, regularity, and routine," Carolyn says. "People need desperately to be in touch with nature, especially in the city. We have tapped into that longing."

While the Ioders are passionate about building community, they're firmly opposed to the gentrification that's currently sweeping through Chicago's other majority-Black and Latinx neighborhoods. The Ioders aren't interested in replacing the neighborhood's heritage; instead, they'd rather expose Chicago-area residents to Austin's unique personality. Events like goat yoga bring people to the west side, sometimes for the first time. The hope is that, after that first trip on the Green Line, visitors will be more likely to return for a visit—say, to explore the Garfield Park Conservatory or to patronize one of the Black-owned

From left: Mealtime; David Ioder takes a chicken out for some fresh air. Police found it running around the city and brought it to the Ioders knowing they could take care of it; Carolyn Ioder strains goat milk in her sterile processing room, funded in part by the Frontera Farmer Foundation.

© JAMIE RAMSAY



businesses that line Chicago Avenue, Austin's main drag.

Through it all, Carolyn's focus remains on the neighborhood. "People come here, and they can see that animals live and die," she says. "They have babies. They grow, they play around. They provide you with memories." Ultimately, witnessing that circle of life can be healing. Speaking as a newly indoctrinated goat birth assistant—placenta tissue does, in fact, wash out of denim—I can confirm that urban farming offers a perspective on life that's as stark as it is beautiful. In a way, it's a

lot like Austin. There's pain here, but there's also promise.

I joined Carolyn on a stroll to the goat yoga pasture a few weeks back. It was a particularly temperate day, and a man in his early 30s was relaxing on his fourth-floor terrace across the street. He waved at us, yelling down to ask when the goats were coming back to the pasture for their spring grazing. "They're my friends!," he hollered. "I miss those guys." Carolyn assured him they'd be back soon. 

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COMMUNITY

Sunshine on Howard Street

Sol Café wants to bring more to the neighborhood than just specialty coffee.

By **CASS BALZER**

By all appearances, Sol Café is a product of gentrification, a prime example of the businesses that arrive in neighborhoods to accommodate newer, wealthier residents. It definitely stands out from its neighbors on Howard Street, which include long-standing family-owned restaurants, payday lending services, a minimart, and a pair of shoe stores. Inside the sunlit storefront, baristas sling specialty lattes amidst dried flowers, plants for sale, and a golden disco ball, which floats just above the register.

But Simone Freeman, the owner of the cafe, which opened its doors more than six years ago, is acutely aware of its place and identity within Rogers Park.

“With my staff’s input, I am constantly checking myself and the business to make sure we’re improving in a way that makes people feel like they can be customers,” says Freeman. “I want people to be able to make Sol their own.”

Freeman, 30, owned a coffee stand while she was still a student at George Washington University, and she wanted to continue the operation when she moved back to Chicago after graduation in 2011. At the time, property developer Jay Johnson was looking for a coffee shop to fill a space in the historic Howard Theatre building. When Freeman heard of the opening, she jumped at the opportunity. Sol Café opened in 2012. It has transformed several times since then, adding a kitchen, baked goods, and plant sales, but the core of its mission remains firm: to provide a quality product to all who want it, not just to people who can afford it.

Accessibility and community are central to Sol Café’s philosophy, and those tenets are made visible through their community engagement programs. Each month, the café chooses a nearby organization to work with,

sponsoring events and matching customer donations to organizations such as the Howard Area Community Center, Gale Community Academy, and the after-school program Family Matters, among others.

“[Sol Café] has led other businesses in realizing you don’t just come to a community. You have to actually engage,” says I. Ashaki McClain, director of the Teen Girls Program at Family Matters. Last year, Sol Café helped sponsor a camping trip to Richard Bong State Recreation Area in Wisconsin for the Teen Girls Program. After fundraising, Freeman and Sol staff member Emmi Greer volunteered to chaperone the trip. “That’s a different level of engagement,” McClain says.

This ethos of community engagement inspired the Sol Supper program, a series of themed community dinners. Started in September 2018 and recurring every four to six weeks, the events are a microcosm of everything the café does in Rogers Park.

The Sol Suppers allow their 40-45 attendees to engage with one another through open seating and family-style sharing. Appetizers are placed in strategic locations around the cafe, encouraging people to walk around the space and mingle with other diners. Nearly every part of the meal seeks to build camaraderie among the participants, chefs, and staff;

Freeman has observed that many people enter as strangers but leave as friends. Freeman does what she can to keep the event open to residents with a range of needs: the menus are often vegetarian, and the day of the week changes each month to accommodate people with atypical work schedules.

“It’s fun to watch people become more open as the night progresses,” Freeman says. “[The experience] asks you to step outside your comfort zone to share food and talk with strangers.”

Over the months, Freeman and her team have honed the Sol Supper experience to incorporate new concepts, flavors, and experiences that highlight professional and recreational Chicago chefs (who have included Rafael Esparza and Daniel Speer from Finom Coffee, John Hagedorn from Elizabeth, and Jeremy Leven of Sweet Home). The menu and price change each month, but Freeman keeps the four-course meals below \$40 to allow as many neighborhood residents to attend as possible.

The neighbors seem to enjoy the events too. Nearly every Sol Supper has sold out.

Although Sol Café still offers boutique-priced fare—sandwiches are \$8-\$10 and a specialty drink runs close to \$5—Freeman is mindful of keeping some items on the menu at accessible prices. She’s constantly searching for ways to make her products more affordable, like introducing free bagged lunches (made from leftovers and extra food) and “\$1 Coffee Mondays” to welcome the neighborhood into the space.

“We don’t want to turn away anyone who is hungry or thirsty, or anyone who can’t afford something here,” Freeman says. “I’m trying to find diverse sources of income so I can put less financial burden on the customer and our employees. That’s a huge reason why I started the suppers and plant sales.” (The houseplants are sourced from Damiane Nickles, the Brighton Park gardener behind the Instagram account @notaplantshop.)

Freeman says she never thinks Sol’s work is done.

“If there’s anybody who has an idea to bring the community together in some higher capacity, I fully welcome it,” says Freeman. “I want the neighborhood to know that Sol is really, truly for everybody.”

@crassblazer

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Mima's is where Cubs go for Cuban

Lincolnwood's erstwhile Taste of Cuba has relaunched in Irving Park.

By **MIKE SULA**

First it was Jorge Soler. Back when he played right field for the Cubs, he really liked the churrasco plate at Cuba 312. Soler told Javier Baez and Willson Contreras and Pedro Strop, and before long all sorts of Latin American players and coaches started hanging out at Billy and Jamie Alvarez's Roscoe Village restaurant. Then they discovered the couple's first restaurant, Taste of Cuba, in Lincolnwood, which served a more traditional, homier menu. That was until the couple shut it down and reopened in Irving Park in February, in a narrow space formerly home to a succession of taquerias and hot dog stands (including a satellite of the once-ascendant La Pasadita empire).

Now painted a vivid pastel pink and blue, sporting a giant Celia Cruz mural on the back wall, and renamed for Billy's abuela, Mima's is just a ten-minute drive from Rickettsville in case any players get sick of short rib disco fries or the Pig Candy BLT.

Here the Alvarazes have installed a truncated version of their old menu, more lunch-focused and sandwich-dominated, still with a few larger plates and some desirable fried bites like yucca fries, empanadas, gooey ham croquettes, and waffle fries topped with *ropa vieja* and a fried egg (speaking of disco fries).

Some extraordinary frycraft is indeed practiced at Mima's, embodied in something as deceptively simple as the tostones. Cross-sectioned, stacked, and smashed, these crackly coins of deep-fried green plantain have a lightness and freshness, utterly unlike the dense and starchy variant you come across all too often. Billy Alvarez says that's because he buys and preps

fresh plantains every morning, and they're fried to order (instead of using pre-peeled-and-cut frozen bags).

Time and the freezer are often the enemies of Chicago's native gluten-free sandwich too. But Alvarez treats Mima's jibarito similarly: freshly fried crisp planks of plantain, drizzled in garlic mojo, bedding the usual set of ornaments (mayo, tomato, lettuce, cheese) with a choice of steak, chicken, lechon, or shrimp, and bringing it back home with a Cuban version with ham, pork, swiss, mustard, and pickles.

Alvarez is half Cuban and half Puerto Rican, and as a kid he worked a couple shifts at Humboldt Park's late Borinquen, where the jibarito was born, so he felt obligated to include one on his menu. For the only strictly non-Cuban item available, it's a very respectable version. But the classic Cubano sandwich itself is something extraordinary, an expertly buttered and pressed package, with all the elements of fat and acidity in balance contained within a uniformly resonant bread jacket. "You have to hear it if you flick it with your fingernail," says Alvarez. He applies this standard so consistently to the media noche, the lechon, and the bistec, as well as to the breakfast sandwiches, that it's likely you'll not notice that it's Turano bread instead of the unique lard-crisped Cuban bread that eludes most every sandwich maker north of Tampa. That's more evident in Mima's only unpressed sandwich, the Gordito, a fat boy stacked with mojo-marinated sirloin, grilled onions, swiss, lettuce, and mayo, with a pair of over easy eggs winking from under the bun.

Skirt steak, pork chops, a bowl of peppery ropa vieja, and juicy shredded roast pork are the core of the meaty platos, each with the choice of classic sides: *arroz con gandules*, or white rice and black beans, and those tostones of course, as well as their softer, sweeter caramelized whole cousins maduros, which behave almost like dessert.

The family of Cuban coffee drinks and breakfast sandwiches are available too, though Alvarez won't open for breakfast until he finds someone willing to work the early hours. He says he wants to keep the menu tight and focused; he has ambitions to open other locations.

In the meantime the regulars from Wrigley Field have found their way to the new spot. "These people know firsthand what this food is supposed to taste like," he says. 

 @MikeSula



Left: from top, steak jibarito, lechon asado, ropa vieja

Below: from left, lechon asado, cubano, gordito

 ALEXIS O'CONNOR





COURTESY OF BLACK LIVES, BLACK WORDS

PREVIEW

Strength in numbers

The I Am . . . Fest celebrating women of color comes to the Goodman Theatre.

By SHERI FLANDERS

This weekend the Goodman Theatre will present the I Am . . . Fest, three days of events and artistic educational programming, including workshops, film screenings, and play readings, to celebrate women of color. It concludes on Monday evening with the International 10-Minute Play Showcase featuring Chicago playwrights Nambi E. Kelley and Loy Webb and the U.S. premiere of *The Interrogation of Sandra Bland* by Mojisola Adebayo, in which 100 women of color perform the transcript of Sandra Bland's arrest.

Simeilia Hodge-Dallaway and Reginald Edmund curated the festival in partnership with the Goodman. An author, dramaturg, arts executive, and one of London's Most Influential People in Theatre of 2018 (according to the *Evening Standard*), Hodge-Dallaway became frustrated by the lack of people of color in positions of leadership in the theater industry. While working as a project manager at the National Theatre's Black Play Archive, she began to wonder why the work of Black

playwrights and theater artists of yesteryear had not filtered into the mainstream. She also observed that she and other highly talented artists were being called back again and again for temporary roles, yet were never invited to fill permanent, senior management positions in leading artistic institutions. This inspired

I AM . . . FEST

Sat 4/27-Mon 4/29: times vary, see website; Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn, 312-443-3800, goodmantheatre.org, International 10-Minute Play Showcase \$10, all other events **FREE**

her to establish Artistic Directors of the Future, an organization that mentors people of color and prepares them for leadership roles in arts organizations in the UK.

Edmund, a playwright and director, was experiencing similar roadblocks in Chicago. He also wanted to find a way to bypass gatekeepers and provide artists of color with a platform. Hodge-Dallaway interviewed him

during field research in America, and the Black Lives, Black Words International Project was born out of their conversation. The project brings together playwrights, visual artists, and spoken word performers and asks them to collaborate on short plays based on the theme "Do Black lives matter?" It debuted to a packed house at the Greenhouse Theater Center in Lincoln Park in 2015 and has since traveled to seven other cities in the U.S. and UK.

The I Am . . . Fest is an outgrowth of that project, specifically intended to honor women-of-color activists, artists, and leaders. Some of this year's highlights include a screening of *Chisholm '72: Unbought and Unbossed*, a documentary about Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman to run for president; *Surviving the Mic: Brave Space Making*, a performance workshop for survivors of sexual violence led by multidisciplinary artist Nikki Patin; and *Making the Artist*, a workshop hosted by Red Clay Dance Company which helps artists understand their agency and power within their communities. Hodge-Dallaway believes that there is beauty and power in activism.

"When we talk about activism, people think of big and lavish ways, but actually it's just speaking out saying, 'There's nobody of color in this poster, or on the board.'"

Hodge-Dallaway is particularly excited about *The Interrogation of Sandra Bland*, which she is directing. "Having 100 women take to the stage to pay homage to Sandra Bland, I would anticipate that they would feel a real sense of unity, and strength in numbers in a way that they haven't experienced before," she says. Edmund adds, "It's especially important and beautiful that it's women of color, that it's Middle Eastern, it's Latina, it's Asian, the whole gamut. It's not just one person that has experienced police brutality, it is something that has affected women of color all throughout the spectrum."

Hodge-Dallaway agrees. "We are the daughters, the sisters, the mothers, the mothers-to-be, the surrogates, the adopted mothers, the adoptive aunts, we are the past, the present, and the future." **R**

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2019 YEAR OF CHICAGO THEATRE

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RR Like buttah
Buyer & Cellar ventures into the darkness of Barbra Streisand's (make-believe) basement shopping mall.

Like a cross between *The Santaland Diaries* and *Sunset Boulevard*, Jonathan Tolins's 2013 one-man comedy sends up the lifestyle of the haves through the eye of the have-nots. Inspired by Barbra Streisand's book *My Passion for Design*, it's the story of struggling LA actor Alex More (Scott Gryder) who takes a job in the make-believe shopping mall in the basement of Streisand's Malibu estate and is horrified to learn how the other half really lives.

More is gobsmacked when he learns, after signing a nondisclosure agreement, who his employer is. What follows is a series of surreal scenes culminating in what More thinks is a real moment of connection with one of his idols. But when he's unceremoniously shown his walking papers, he realizes the danger of getting too familiar with those who live on pedestals.

It is a tribute to Tolins's quick, witty words and, especially, to Gryder's complete command of the stage that a play about an imaginary mall in Barbra Streisand's basement turns out to be so compelling. I don't have a clue what appeal Streisand could hold for anyone, but More's absolute devotion to her and the spotless glamorous lifestyle she represents is thoroughly believable (if kind of sad). People like Streisand who live in a megalomaniacal bubble can't allow meaningful relationships with others or they risk puncturing the perfection they've worked so hard to fashion. The only people sadder than those inside the bubble are the ones on the outside eager to get in. More is lucky to have been banished and we're happy for him to live his own life rather than prop up someone else's delusions. Don-terrio Johnson directed. —**DMITRY SAMAROV** **BUYER & CELLAR** Through 5/19: *Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 2 PM, Pride Arts Center, 4139 N. Broadway, 773-857-0222, pridefilmsandplays.com, \$30-\$40, \$20 students, seniors, and military.*

Corporate drumming
Djembe! The Show works much better as theater for kids than inspiration for adults.

Everything about *Djembe! The Show* starts to make more sense when you imagine it out of its current context—the theater—and back in its spiritual place of origin, a corporate seminar. Created by Doug Manuel, a white British inspirational speaker and social entrepreneur who sells motivational speeches and leadership retreats, this 90-minute commercial interactive musical experience invites audiences to learn djembe drum fundamentals by playing along to affordably licensed hits.

As a concert and work of children's theater, components of it are pretty damn cool. Preshow, a projection requesting audiences to “please wait to play your djembe until the show begins” went largely (and understandably) ignored by the excited families in the house on Easter weekend after each audience member was greeted with a weighty, tantalizing drum on his or her seat. There's an undeniable energy to the show from minute one, a promise that West African djembe master Fodé Moussa “Lavia” Camara makes good on once he really gets going.

But it's inconceivable that Manuel and director West Hyler's educational script, which is coated in a



Djembe! The Show
 © LIZ LAUREN

thick layer of guru webinar-talk, is intended for anyone but the youngest of audiences. Vocalist Rashada Dawan and emcee Ben Hope deserve so much better than having to give flimsy speeches about how, when you really think about it, playing the djembe and texting on a cell phone really aren't that different. And my heart plummets imagining auditoriums full of grown corporate adults learning about the rhythms of West African music via “99 Luftballons” and “Gangnam Style.” —**DAN JAKES** **DJEMBE! THE SHOW** Through 6/9: *Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 2 and 8 PM, Sun 2 PM, Apollo Theater, 2540 N. Lincoln, 773-935-6100, apollochicago.com, \$39-\$53.*

RR Boy meets fox
First Love is the Revolution examines the brutal nature of humans and other animals.

Whimsical, brutal, and evocative of *The Secret of NIMH*, *First Love is the Revolution* is a modern fable and one of the more interesting plays I've seen. It's the story of Rdeca, a young fox who allows herself to be tamed by a human teenager, Basti, and the consequences of that choice. In the dramaturg's notes, we learn that playwright Rita Kalnejais was inspired by an unspecified international dispute. Fortunately, Kalnejais did not write a direct allegory, which saves this from becoming a morality play.

Ilsa Arciniegas plays Rdeca with a bubbly intensity as she navigates coming of age, her enthusiasm and fear combining to create an intense and deadly teenage recklessness. When her mother Cochineal (played by Lucy Carapetyan in a heartbreaking performance) teaches Rdeca to kill, it becomes a powerful metaphor for parents passing on their brutality and prejudices to their children under the guise of “survival tools.”

Jordan Arredondo, who plays Basti, has a gentle presence. “You smell like something that has given up,” Rdeca tells him, a terrifying dare to measure up to the bar of aggressiveness our society forces on men. Director Devon de Mayo is at her best when teasing out the charm and comedy in the destruction. Sequences involving supporting actors playing a dog, cat, chickens, and a mole are absolutely hilarious. However, the intentionally light tone takes the air out of a few of the more brutal and dramatic moments of the play, including the wild and disquieting ending. —**SHERI FLANDERS** **FIRST LOVE IS THE REVOLUTION** Through 5/25: *Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, Steep Theatre, 1115 W. Berwyn, 773-649-3186, steeptheatre.com, \$10-\$38.*

RR Let's hear it for the boy
 The stage musical of *Footloose* is just like the movie except without the boring parts.

The problem with the 1984 movie *Footloose* is that it tries so damned hard to be a serious, realistic drama about a rebellious teen fighting against the joy-killing puritanism of a middle American small town that it drains the joy out of the best parts of the movie: the silly, energetic, entertaining dance scenes. The beauty of the 1998 Broadway version of the movie, at least as it has been realized in this Marriott revival, directed by Gary Griffin and choreographed by William Carlos Angulo, is that the most sanctimonious elements in the story have been stripped away, leaving more room for the fun that the show's hero yearns to bring to the town.

The basic story (adapted for the stage by Dean Pitchford and Walter Bobbie, based on Pitchford's original screenplay) remains—young man battles prominent stick-in-the-mud minister for the soul of the town and the heart of the minister's daughter—but that plot only provides a frame on which to hang the myriad rousing songs and dances that make up this show. Many of these tunes were hits in the 80s (“Let's Hear it for the Boy,” “Holding out for a Hero”) though the music director, Ryan T. Nelson, and Griffin's cast work hard to make these old songs sound new again. Aidan Wharton delivers an energetic performance in the lead role, evoking the spirit of Kevin Bacon's performance in the movie without slavishly copying his moves. Ben Barker is quite winning as Wharton's goofy sidekick. —**JACK HELBIG** **FOOTLOOSE** Through 6/2: *Wed 1 and 7:30 PM, Thu 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 4 and 8 PM, Sun 1 and 5 PM; also Thu 5/23 and 5/30, 1 PM; no performances Wed 5/22 and 5/29, 7:30 PM, or Sun 6/2, 5 PM, Marriott Theatre, 10 Marriott Dr., Lincolnshire, 847-634-0200, marriotttheatre.com, \$50-\$65.*

Treading water
Grinning From Fear to Fear at Second City e.t.c. doesn't get funny till hour two.

Second City e.t.c.'s 43rd revue begins with the cast paddling through the audience in a faux water ballet. It spends the next hour trying to find its footing. Written and performed by Atra Asdou, E.J. Cameron, Mark Campbell, Andrew Knox, Laurel Krabacher, and Chuck Norment and directed by Anneliese Tof, the two-hour production finishes strong, but is hobbled by too many

tired jokes and sketches that trail off when they should end with a comic kapow.

Do we need yet another sketch about how periods turn women into monsters? No, but we get one here, complete with a woman (Krabacher) wearing a face mask that makes her look monstrous. There's an equally tired bit about an old lady (Asdou) who fans her crotch in response to old-time Hollywood heartthrobs. The overwrought crotch fanning is an eye-roller the first time it's used as a punchline. By the fourth time you start to wonder whether everyone in the writers' room got distracted by sandwiches or something.

A more successful whack at low-hanging fruit arrives with a sketch about a serial killer (Knox) who only murders wealthy millennial bros. Knox saves the bit with his Hannibal Lecter-on-nitrous shenanigans, but coming for brosefs is old news.

Grinning does have moments of scathing, insightful comedy. Among them: Campbell as an unwilling contestant on *Toss and Turn*, the nightly game show hosted by your subconscious and designed to kill you via a lethal mix of insomnia and self-doubt. When the ensemble plumbs the fathoms of human insecurity, it discovers plenty of human comedy. Far too often though, it's treading water. —**CATEY SULLIVAN** **GRINNING FROM FEAR TO FEAR** Thu 8 PM, Fri-Sat 8 and 11 PM, Sun 7 PM; also Wed 4/24, 8 PM, Second City e.t.c. Theater, 1608 N. Wells, 312-337-3992, www.secondcity.com, \$31-\$58.

You've got questions?
 The Gamergate-inspired drama *Non-Player Character* has all the answers you're expecting.

Red Theater has achieved its admirable goal to “ask dangerous questions theatrically” in the past. But this time playwright Walt McGough's schematic 2018 Gamergate-inspired drama provides only answers—and likely ones the young storefront audience this company courts already know.

Ambitious Katja, a 22-year-old coder, is passionate about designing a noncompetitive online game that involves creating trees, attaching stories to them, and watching multiple players' stories interconnect. Trent, a hard-core gamer and Katja's bosom college friend, now at a dead end and living with his parents, can't understand a game where no one wins. The calculatedly opposite-gendered pair (now living on opposite sides of the country, no less) meet only as avatars in a game called *SpearLight*, which Trent's online friend Feldrick joins primarily to exhibit Neanderthal-level sexism. When Katja spurns Trent's romantic advances, he flips from supportive friend to vindictive, self-righteous misogynist in the blink of an eye.

Throughout, it's always clear whose thoughts and actions deserve finger snaps and whose should be instantly condemned. McGough ends up with a staged opinion piece short on nuance and long on repetitive dialogue. Director Beth Wolf has assembled a strong cast, with careful, passionate performances from Alice Wu as Katja and Matthew Schnitker as Trent. But McGough doesn't offer much beyond entry-level critiques of toxic male privilege and gender bias with a pinch of modest female self-empowerment. Like many contemporary playwrights, McGough seems more interested in reassuring his audience that they're right-thinking progressives than in challenging any of their assumptions. —**JUSTIN HAYFORD** **NON-PLAYER CHARACTER** Through 5/18: *Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Mon 5/13, 7:30; no performance Thu 4/25, Athenaum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport, 773-733-0540, redtheater.org, \$22, \$17 students.*



Footloose 📷 LIZ LAUREN

RR Shakespeare for right now

Babes With Blades gives us a visceral, devastating *Othello*.

The line “Men should be what they seem” sounds so contemporary, it’s hard to believe Shakespeare wrote it more than 400 years ago. Yet in this Babes With Blades production of *Othello*, under the direction of Mignon McPherson Stewart, nothing is as it seems. Though set in the Shakespearean period, this production feels devastatingly of the moment. It’s one of the strongest, most visceral productions of Shakespeare running in this city now.

In classic Babes With Blades style, all members of the cast are women or nonbinary. Thus, Othello is played by the stellar Brianna Buckley, who gives an astounding performance, running the gamut from fierce flirt to terrifying embodiment of toxic masculinity. Othello is a lauded Moorish general who has won the heart of the dutiful Desdemona (a distinguished Sarah Liz Bell). This

stirs up tension among the other characters, including Desdemona’s father Brabantio (Michelle McKenzie-Voigt) and her sad-boy discarded suitor Rodrigo (Rachel Mock). Racism runs rampant, but Othello asserts what he’s earned, leaving Iago (Kathrynne Wolf) perfectly poised to tear his reputation and marriage down with musings and whispers.

We sit in the round watching chaos unfold. A beautifully tiled floor supports a canopied platform with sheer curtains that transforms the space from scene to scene. This world is both the characters’ and ours. Director Stewart and fight/intimacy designer Samantha Kaufman juxtapose moments of tenderness and tension between Othello and Desdemona, from the playful rejection of a kiss to the unfortunate, gut-wrenching end. There is hope, and then there is nothing. —YASMIN ZACARIA MIKAEL *OTHELLO* Through 5/25: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, Factory Theater, 1623 W. Howard, 773-904-0391, babeswithblades.org, \$28, \$15 students and seniors. **B**

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FILM

NOW PLAYING

The Big City

Satyajit Ray seems to lose all his grace and subtlety whenever he strays into “message” territory. This 1963 film, whose original title is *Mahanagar*, about a young wife who goes to work (selling knitting machines) over the protests of her husband and his family, isn’t an exception. The plot is set up in a thin, simpleminded way to prove that the wife was right—her husband is soon fired from his job as a bank clerk, and she must support the family by herself. This is exactly the kind of screenwriter’s trick that proves nothing at all; the real moral and social issues haven’t been confronted. With Anil Chatterji and Madhabie Mukherjee. In Bengali with subtitles. —DAVE KEHR 131 min. 35mm archival print. Wed 5/1, 7 and 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

The Bird With the Crystal Plumage

Dario Argento’s undistinguished Italian thriller was an unexpected hit in 1970, thanks largely, one suspects, to some violent scenes that were unusually graphic for their time. With Tony Musante and Suzy Kendall. In Italian with subtitles. —DAVE KEHR 98 min. Fri 4/26-Sat 4/27, midnight. Music Box

RR A Brighter Summer Day

Bearing in mind Theodore Dreiser’s *An American Tragedy*, this astonishing epic by Edward Yang

(1991), set over one Taipei school year in the early 60s, would fully warrant the subtitle “A Taiwanese Tragedy.” A powerful statement from Yang’s generation about what it means to be Taiwanese, superior even to his recent masterpiece *Yi Yi*, it has a novelistic richness of character, setting, and milieu unmatched by any other 90s film (a richness only partially apparent in its three-hour version). What Yang does with objects—a flashlight, a radio, a tape recorder, a Japanese sword—resonates more deeply than what most directors do with characters, because along with an uncommon understanding of and sympathy for teenagers Yang has an exquisite eye for the troubled universe they inhabit. This is a film about alienated identities in a country undergoing a profound existential crisis—a *Rebel Without a Cause* with much of the same nocturnal lyricism and cosmic despair. Notwithstanding the masterpieces of Hou Hsiao-hsien, the Taiwanese new wave starts here. —JONATHAN ROSENBAUM 230 min. Thu 5/2, 5 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

RR Dark Passage

An odd, atmospheric 1947 thriller with a San Francisco setting, adapted by writer-director Delmer Daves from a David Goodis novel and starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall. We hear but don’t see Bogart for roughly the first third of the movie, which features the subjective camera (a la *Lady in the Lake*, but handled more successfully) as his character, who’s wrongly accused of murder, escapes from prison and undergoes plastic surgery, only to emerge looking like . . . Humphrey Bogart, before setting out to clear ➡

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continued from 19

his name. The effective supporting cast includes Agnes Moorehead, Bruce Bennett, Tom D'Andrea, and Clifton Young. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 107 min. 35mm. Sat 4/27-Sun 4/28, 11:30 am Music Box

N Dogman

In a dog-eat-dog world, even the runt of the litter has a breaking point. We learn this lesson in *Dogman*, the story of Marcello (Marcello Fonte), a dog groomer who tries to find his way out from beneath the thumb of the neighborhood thug, Simone (Eduardo Pesce), who is constantly forcing Marcello to participate in his latest schemes. Marcello is almost immediately likable. He loves animals, he loves his daughter. He's built a humble life for himself. He can soothe even the angriest snarling dog. What he can't soothe is Simone, his polar opposite, the Goliath to his David. Where Marcello is small and mild-mannered, Simone is hulking and brutish. While Marcello risks his life to save a dog, Simone spends his time terrorizing the neighborhood and pummeling anyone who gets in his way. But Marcello's unwavering gentle nature will also be his downfall. He gets roped deeper into Simone's dangerous antics—until one day that rope snaps. Told through unflinching shots in grayish hues, Matteo Garrone's film keeps viewers holding their breath to the bitter end. In Italian with subtitles. —**NOËLLE D. LILLEY** 103 min. Fri 4/26, 3:45 and 8:15 PM; Sat 4/27, 3 and 5 PM; Sun 4/28, 3:15 PM; Mon 4/29, 6 PM; Tue 4/30, 7:45 PM; Wed 5/1, 6 PM; and Thu 5/2, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

N An Elephant Sitting Still

Set over just one day but running almost four hours, Hu Bo's 2018 hyperrealist epic is the most audacious debut feature from mainland China since Wang Bing's nine-hour documentary *West of the Tracks* (2002). Like Wang's film, it derives its power through the accumulation of time and detail—Hu shoots nearly every scene, no matter how long, in a single take, making you feel weighed down in the characters' lives. However ambitious, though, the writer-director-editor still had a long way to go in the fine art of characterization; you care about the subjects because they suffer so much, not because they're particularly distinctive. Hu alternates between four major characters: an old man about to be thrown out of his home by his grown son; the old man's grandson, a bullied high school student who accidentally kills his tormentor; the bully's older brother, who's involved in the criminal underworld; and a female high school student involved in a sexual relationship with an administrator. This gets more formally impressive as the story grows increasingly despairing, cannily seducing you into its pessimistic worldview. Sadly, we'll never know how Hu would have matured from here; he committed suicide a few months before the film's premiere. In Mandarin with subtitles. —**BEN SACHS** 234 min. Fri 4/26, 2 PM; Sat 4/27, 7 PM; Sun 4/28, 1 PM; Mon 4/29, 6 PM; and Wed 5/1, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

RR F for Fake

Orson Welles's underrated 1973 essay film—made from discarded documentary footage by Francois Reichenbach and new material from Welles—forms a kind of dialectic with Welles's never-completed *It's All True*. The main subjects are art forger Elmyr de Hory, Clifford Irving, Howard Hughes, Pablo Picasso, Welles himself, and the practice and meaning of deception. Despite some speculation that this film was Welles's indirect reply to Pauline Kael's bogus contention that he didn't write a word of *Citizen Kane*, his sly com-



Dogman

mentary—seconded by some of the trickiest editing anywhere—implies that authorship is a pretty dubious notion anyway, a function of the even more dubious art market and its team of “experts.” Alternately superficial and profound, the film also enlists the services of Oja Kodar, Welles's principal collaborator after the late 60s, as actor, erotic spectacle, and cowriter, and briefer appearances by many other Welles cohorts. Michel Legrand supplied the wonderful score. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 85 min. 35mm. Former Reader film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum lectures at the Tuesday screening. Fri 4/26, 6 PM; Sat 4/27, 5 PM; and Tue 4/30, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

RR Funny Face

Writer Leonard Gershe, director Stanley Donen, and producer Roger Edens take on French existentialism in this colorful and sumptuous 1957 musical, set largely in Paris and starring Fred Astaire and Audrey Hepburn, with a dreamy Gershwin score. Although the anti-intellectualism gets thick in spots, the visuals are consistently stylish. Astaire is a fashion photographer (Richard Avedon supervised his photo sessions), Hepburn a Greenwich Village bookworm transformed into a model (clothes by Givenchy), and Kay Thompson plays their fashion editor. The film's sophistication is compromised by the rather dumb plot, but some of the numbers—especially “Think Pink” and “Bonjour Paris”—are standouts. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 103 min. Preceded by a panel discussion led by fashion historian Nena Ivon. Thu 5/2, 7 PM. Music Box

RR The Image Book

Even when they trade in quotations, the films of Jean-Luc Godard exude a sense of spontaneity. The Swiss filmmaker has never been able to stay put on an idea or story line for very long; his work always goes off in unexpected directions or sprouts up non sequiturs. A possible explanation for the films' eccentric forms is that Godard has always embraced chance, coincidence, and arbitrary decisions as a core part of his creative practice. When he employs quotations (whether from written texts, movies, paintings, or musical compositions), he'll often do so because he simply likes how the sources look or sound. He also likes to name his films before determining anything else about them, letting the titles

guide his ideas, motifs, arguments, and counterarguments as if they were watchwords or mantras. A dense and cryptic essay film in the vein of his magnum opus, *Histoire(s) du Cinéma* (1988-'98), Godard's 2018 feature, *The Image Book*, also began as a title and abounds with quotations both carefully and randomly chosen. It's a film that seems to be taking shape as you watch it—and in a sense, it is: Godard crams every moment with so much information that you can't possibly take it all in at once. —**BEN SACHS** 84 min. Sat 4/27, 7 and 9:30 PM; and Sun 4/28, 4:15 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

Madame X: An Absolute Ruler

A charismatic and tyrannical pirate (Tabea Blumen-schein) entices a motley crew of bored women onto her ship with the promise of gold and love, but their camaraderie unravels as the passengers unleash their libidos. This high-seas adventure (1977) marked the debut of German director Ulrike Ottinger, and like much of her work it's a maddening mix of exotica, feminist rhetoric, postmodern humor, and allusions to literature and pop culture. Her stream-of-consciousness narrative style recalls Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Rivette, Andy Warhol, and the theater of the absurd, yet her visuals are deliberately flat and the acting (by her friends, including filmmaker Yvonne Rainer as an overwrought artist) is strictly silent-movie pantomime. Intended as a political allegory about the marginalization of women, the film hasn't aged well: at best it's an aesthetic romp, at worst a precious game of dress-up. In German with subtitles. —**TED SHEN** 141 min. Wed 5/1, 8 PM. Comfort StationFREE

Phantom of the Paradise

Brian De Palma's Grand Guignol send-up and put-down of the rock business (1974), with a maimed musician (William Finley) haunting a concert hall operated by a malevolent mogul (Paul Williams). This was one of De Palma's early efforts, and its excesses can be chalked up to youthful enthusiasm—the ideas seem appealingly audacious even when they misfire, which is more often than not. Unfortunately, De Palma's style failed to develop beyond the superficial cleverness exercised here, even as his films grew more pretentious. With Jessica Harper and Gerrit Graham. —**DAVE KEHR** 92 min. Thu 5/2, 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

Rafiki

Lively but a little too on the nose, this Kenyan drama delivers a straightforward lesson about antigay bigotry in Africa. It concerns the romance between two teenage girls in Nairobi whose fathers are running against each other in a local election. They try to keep their love a secret, knowing they would harm their fathers' careers (and bring untold punishment upon themselves) if they were to be exposed; after a short period of happiness, their worst expectations come true. Cowriter-director Wanuri Kahiu elicits sensitive performances from the cast, and her use of color is attractive as well. But it's hard to escape the feeling that the film is basically an extended public service announcement; Kahiu has few discernible goals apart from drawing attention to an important subject. In English and subtitled Swahili —**BEN SACHS** 82 min. Fri 4/26, 2 and 6:30 PM; Sat 4/27, 3:15 PM; Sun 4/28, 1:30 and 5:15 PM; Mon 4/29, 8 PM; Tue 4/30, 6 PM; and Thu 5/2, 6 and 8:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

N Red Joan

This tony docudrama is loosely based on the life of Melita Norwood, a British woman who smuggled state secrets to the Soviets from the 1930s to the 1970s and wasn't exposed until 1999. Given the facts of Norwood's life, the film would almost have to be interesting; it's engaging on a narrative level, but that's about all. Lindsay Shapero's script (adapted from a novel by Jennie Rooney) introduces a potentially interesting approach to the heroine, playing up her romanticism and independent spirit while keeping her political convictions ambiguous. Yet Trevor Nunn's generically handsome direction, devoid of personal feeling, has the effect of paving over any nuance there is to the writing. Every plot point and every character insight gets delivered with the same manufactured smoothness; the movie is naggingly bland in the way one associates with “respectable” British cinema. With Sophie Cookson, Tom Hughes, and Judi Dench. —**BEN SACHS** R, 101 min. At Century Centre. Visit landmarktheatres.com for showtimes.

RR La rupture

One of the key films of the 70s, *La rupture* is Claude Chabrol's most audacious experiment with narrative form—a modernist reworking of the melodrama (1970). Stéphane Audran is innocence unprotected, a wife and mother whose husband has gone mad under LSD, and who now has to suffer a bizarre plot spun by her father-in-law to recover custody of her child. The “rupture” of the title belongs to the narrative, which begins with clear black/white, good/evil distinctions and then gradually self-destructs, breaking down into increasingly elliptical and imponderable fragments. Highly recommended. In French with subtitles. —**DAVE KEHR** 124 min. 35mm. Mon 4/29, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

RR The Thin Red Line

There's less sense of period here and more feeling for terrain than in any other World War II movie that comes to mind. Terrence Malick's strongest suits in his two previous features, *Badlands* (1973) and *Days of Heaven* (1978)—a painterly sense of composition and a bold and original use of offscreen narration—are enhanced in this 1998 feature, first by a successful wedding of ecology and narrative (which never quite happened in *Days of Heaven*) and second by the notion of a collective hero, which permits the internal monologues of many characters in turn. I haven't read the James Jones novel this is based on, which some feel

FILM

is his best, but Malick clearly is distancing the material philosophically and poetically, muting the drama periodically and turning it into reverie. This may have its occasional dull stretches, but in contrast to *Saving Private Ryan* it's the work of a grown-up with something to say about the meaning and consequences of war. The fine cast includes Sean Penn, Adrien Brody, Jim Caviezel, Ben Chaplin, John Cusack, Woody Harrelson, Elias Koteas, Nick Nolte, John C. Reilly, and, in tiny parts, John Travolta and George Clooney. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM**
R, 170 min. 35mm. Introduced and discussion led by a DePaul University faculty member. Tue 4/30, 7 PM. Music Box

Thriller

In Dallas Jackson's directorial debut, teens living in the heart of South Central LA must face the consequences of a humiliating prank gone wrong. A boy (Jason Woods) is lured into a home and taunted by a group of children. When one tormenter goes too far, the boy reacts fast and thinks later. The result is deadly. Jackson's, um, thrilling story often falls into the usual plot holes of classic horror tales—jump scares litter the film, every dark corner has the potential to hide the villain—but the scare factor is often limited by the improbability of certain scenarios. Take, for example, when a girl (Pepi Sonuga) not only develops a split personality but somehow takes a famous R&B singer to a dance where he spontaneously performs. A strong theme intertwined into the film's plot, but abandoned early on, is the troubling effects of growing up in an impoverished neighborhood consumed by gang violence. Jackson's storytelling does allow for a rewarding twist, but one question lingers: was justice served or does a debt remain to be paid? —**ATAVIA REED** 87 min. Now streaming on Netflix.

ALSO PLAYING

Avengers: Endgame

Anthony Russo and Joe Russo directed this sequel to *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018), in which the Marvel Comics superheroes must regroup to try to undo the damage to the universe in the earlier film. With Robert Downey Jr., Chris Evans, Mark Ruffalo, Chris Hemsworth, Scarlett Johansson, Jeremy Renner, Don Cheadle, Paul Rudd, Brie Larson, Karen Gillan, Danai Gurira, Bradley Cooper, and Josh Brolin. *PG-13*, 182 min. Block 37, ArcLight, Century Centre, Century 12 and Cinemas 6, Chatham 14, City North 14, Ford City, Galewood



Avengers: Endgame

Crossings, Harper Theater, Navy Pier IMAX, New 400, River East 21, Roosevelt Collection, 600 N. Michigan, Webster Place 11

Buddy

Dutch filmmaker Heddy Honigmann directed this documentary about guide dogs and their owners. In Dutch with subtitles. 86 min. Fri 4/26, 7 and 9 PM; Sat 4/27, 3, 5, 7, and 9 PM; Sun 4/28, 1, 3, 5, and 7 PM; and Mon 4/29-Thu 5/2, 7 and 9 PM. Facets Cinematheque

CHA/DePaul Spring Doc Film Premiere

A program of four short documentaries made by female youth from CHA, in collaboration with DePaul's School of Cinematic Arts. Sun 4/28, 1 PM. Chicago Cultural Center, Claudia Cassidy Theater **FREE**

CineYouth Festival

The Chicago International Film Festival's annual CineYouth Festival is a showcase of youth-produced films from around the world in ten different programs. At Music Box Theatre. Visit chicagofilmfestival.com/cineyouth for the full schedule. Fri 4/26-Sun 4/28. **FREE**

The Delta Force

Chuck Norris and Lee Marvin are the chiefs of a special squad sent to the Middle East to rescue the passengers of a hijacked jetliner. With Martin Balsam, George Kennedy, Lainie Kazan, Robert Vaughn, and Shelley Winters; the director is Menahem Golan (*Over the Brooklyn Bridge*). 1986. *R*, 125 min. Fri 4/26-Mon 4/29, 11 PM. Logan

Documenting the Archive

A graduate student film conference organized by PhD candidates at the University of Chicago, focused on the various ways documentary film and ideas about archives intersect, with a keynote lecture on Friday and a series of panels on Saturday. Schedule at documentingthearchive.wordpress.com. Fri 4/26, 5 PM and Sat 4/27, 9:30 AM. Univ. of Chicago Logan Center for the Arts **FREE**

Hamburger Eyes

A short documentary about the San Francisco street photography magazine. Aaron Rose directed. Show- ➔

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FILM

Naila and the Uprising



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ing as part of an event that also includes a discussion of the music of Lou Reed and the Velvet Underground. [Free admission, but registration required at eventbrite.com.](#) [Fri 4/26, 8 PM.](#) [The Hoxton Chicago](#) [FREE](#)

Hesburgh

A documentary about the life and career of longtime Notre Dame University president Theodore Hesburgh. Patrick Creadon directed. [104 min.](#) [At Music Box Theatre.](#) [Visit \[musicboxtheatre.com\]\(http://musicboxtheatre.com\) for showtimes.](#)

Man on a Swing

Frank Perry directed this 1974 crime film about a police chief investigating a killing in his small town who is offered help by a psychic. With Cliff Robertson, Joel Grey, and Dorothy Tristan. [PG, 110 min.](#) [Tue 4/30, 7 PM.](#) [Univ. of Chicago Doc Films](#)

The Man Who Stole Banksy

Marco Proserpio's Italian-produced documentary explores the events surrounding a wall-painting in Bethlehem by Banksy, which offended local Palestinians, including the owner of the wall, who sets out to remove and sell the work. [93 min.](#) [Wed 5/1, 8 PM.](#) [Gene Siskel Film Center](#)

Naila and the Uprising

Julia Bacha directed this partly-animated U.S./Palestinian hybrid documentary about Palestinian activist and resistance fighter Naila Ayesh. In English and subtitled Arabic and Hebrew. [76 min.](#) [Showing as part of the Palestine American Film Festival.](#) [Thu 5/2, 8 PM.](#) [Gene Siskel Film Center](#)

Notes on an Appearance

Ricky D'Ambrose directed this mystery film about the disappearance of a young man and the vague clues left behind. [60 min.](#) [Fri 4/26, 7:30 PM.](#) [Nightingale](#)

Out of the Vault: How We Work

A program of three documentary films from the Chicago Film Archives' collection: JoAnn Elam's *Chocolate Cake* (c. 1973, 4 min.), Loretta Smith's *Where Did you Get That Woman?* (1982, 30 min.), and Jim Klein, Julia Reichert, and Miles Mogulescu's *Union Maids* (1976, 51 min.). [85 min.](#) [Smith attends the screening.](#) [Sat 4/27, 7 PM.](#) [Chicago Filmmakers](#)

Ploey

Árni Ásgeirsson directed this animated Icelandic kids film about a plover chick left behind in the Arctic when its family migrates south for the winter. The English-language version features voice work by Jamie Oram, Sean Astin, John Stamos, and Georgina Sutcliffe. [90 min.](#) [Mon 4/29, 4:30 PM.](#) [Music Box](#)

Runner

Chicago filmmaker Clare Cooney directed this short dramatic thriller (2017) about a woman who sees something she shouldn't have while out for a run. [12 min.](#) [Showing on the curated YouTube channel Omeleto](#)

Silvered Water, Syria Self-Portrait

Exiled Syrian filmmaker Ossama Mohammed and Wiam Simav Bedirxan directed this 2014 French-Syrian documentary about the Syrian Civil War. In Arabic with subtitles. [110 min.](#) [Mohammad attends the screening.](#) [Preceded by an a capella performance by singer Noma Omran.](#) [Thu 5/2, 7 PM.](#) [Univ. of Chicago Logan Center for the Arts](#) [FREE](#)

Soufra

A 2018 U.S.-Lebanese documentary about women entrepreneurs in Lebanon who start their own cooking and catering company. Thomas A. Morgan directed. In Arabic with subtitles. [Showing as part of the Palestine American Film Festival.](#) [73 min.](#) [Fri 4/26, 8 PM.](#) [Gene Siskel Film Center](#)

The Truth: Lost at Sea

Ritaf Audeh directed this Jordanian documentary about the 2010 Freedom Flotilla, an attempt to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza to bring in humanitarian support and which turned deadly when the Israeli military attacked the ships. In various languages with subtitles. [Showing as part of the Palestine American Film Festival.](#) [56 min.](#) [Sun 4/28, 5:30 PM.](#) [Gene Siskel Film Center](#)

Two Plains & a Fancy

Lev Kalman and Whitney Horn directed this trippy, slacker comic western about three people (a painter, a confidence woman, and a French geologist) wandering through the 1890s American west. [90 min.](#) [Fri 4/26, 6:30 and 8:30 PM; Sat 4/27, 2:30, 4:30, 6:30, and 8:30 PM; Sun 4/28, 2:30, 4:30, and 6:30 PM; and Mon 4/29-Thu 5/2, 6:30 and 8:30 PM.](#) [Facets Cinematheque](#)

UIC MFA Thesis Screening

A program of work by MFA students at the University of Illinois-Chicago. Showing with films by UIC alums Mary Helena Clark, Mike Gibisser, and Zachary Hutchinson. [57 min.](#) [Sun 4/28, 7 PM.](#) [Filmfront](#) [FREE](#)

What Walaa Wants

Christy Garland directed this Canadian/Danish documentary about a 15-year-old girl who decides to join the Palestinian Security Forces. In Arabic with subtitles. [Showing as part of the Palestine American Film Festival.](#) [89 min.](#) [Sat 4/27, 8 PM.](#) [Gene Siskel Film Center](#)

Windy City Horrorama

A three-day festival of horror-film features and shorts. [At the Davis Theater.](#) [Fri 4/26-Sun 4/28.](#) [Full schedule at \[windycityhorrorama.com\]\(http://windycityhorrorama.com\).](#) [FI](#)

Operation Hennessy digs a new channel for Chicago hip-hop

Keen-eyed rapper Qari hooks up with producer Green Sllime and opens the floodgates on his reservoir of irreverent old-school beats.

By LEOR GALIL



Green Sllime and Qari (in plaid pants) outside Sllime's apartment in Logan Square. DAVON CLARK

On February 12, 2019, Qari Delaney spent a candlelit evening smoking a joint alone in his roommate's jacuzzi tub with a lavender bath bomb. To further set the mood, the 23-year-old Chicago rapper listened to his own music: *Operation Hennessy*, his first full-length collaboration with local producer, rapper, and DJ Green Sllime, which would come out the next day. "It was honestly deeply meditative—I felt like I was in the ocean or some shit," Qari says. "I was transported. It was beautiful."

Qari broke into the Chicago hip-hop scene in 2012, joining Supreme Regime, whose small but dedicated following included Lyrical Lemonade founder and in-demand videographer Cole Bennett. Since then, he's become one of its most consistent players. Supreme Regime split in 2013, but within a year Qari had cofounded underground supergroup Hurt Everybody, who got popular enough to sell out Reggie's Rock Club a few weeks before their own demise in 2016.

Qari has been a solo artist ever since, and it looks like he's building toward the big break that Hurt Everybody didn't last long enough

to see. In March 2018, Bennett made a video for Qari's darkly twinkling 2017 single "Pants From Japan," and it racked up more than half a million YouTube views in two weeks. The following month, Qari dropped the solo album *No Time to Explain*, whose tense but mellow "Baghdadi" appeared on a list by *New York Times* music reporter Joe Coscarelli of the dozen songs he'd listened to the most in 2018.

Despite his successes, Qari has always felt anxious about releasing music—until *Operation Hennessy*. For the first time, he says, he wasn't worried about the quality of what he'd made, only about whether it would find its audience. The loose energy and raw production of *Operation Hennessy* have more in common with gritty 90s boom-bap than with contemporary trends such as trap or Soundcloud rap. "There are so many times where it was like, 'Who in their right mind wants to hear this?'" Qari says.

"I'd be like, 'Me, me! I wanna hear this! This is the shit I wanna hear,'" Sllime replies. Best known for his ongoing gig as touring DJ for Mick Jenkins (one of Chicago's best recent rap exports), he's been producing and rapping for more than a decade. He's got an affinity for

old hardware, and he made most of *Operation Hennessy* on a discontinued Roland SP-404 sampler. Since late 2016, he's also worked as part of local promotion and video company 119 Productions to host 18 episodes of *Sllime's Broke Ass Low Budget Show*, a YouTube-based talk show whose jarring cuts, fragmented segments, and loose style reflect his musical aesthetic. He's obviously a fan of Wu-Tang Clan—during our interview at Sllime's Logan Square apartment, Qari showed me the producer's Wu-branded nunchucks.

By his own count, Sllime has recorded hundreds if not thousands of songs, but unlike Qari he hasn't released much—a loose single, a contribution to a local compilation, a beat on someone else's mixtape. *Operation Hennessy* could change that, and at the very least it seems certain to kick off a longer partnership with Qari.

"This project meant eliminating anxieties," Qari says. "Pulling myself out of whatever fuckin' terrible pit of despair I put myself in as an artist—always doubting myself and always tellin' myself I'm no good at what I do."

"The doubt is gone," Sllime says. "That's what it did for me too. It killed the doubt." ➔

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 Thu, June 6 - Chris Knight
 Sat, June 8 - Tom Russell

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Operation Hennessy shows the scene's versatility. People get caught up in just one specific type of rap or maybe two specific types of rap coming out of Chicago, and I think it just helped a lot for Qari and Sllime to show that they were more than what they'd already shown Chicago. Qari's a dope-ass lyricist. Sllime's a dope-ass lyricist too, but he's even colder on the beats. Them putting out that project, it was like, "Yeah, we can do it."

—producer-rapper SolarFive

Sllime, 29, got his first gig at 14, spinning records at a dance at the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools (he graduated in 2008). He'd convinced people he could DJ, but he had to borrow turntables from a cousin six years his senior. He didn't own any vinyl either, so he bought records from the Virgin Megastore on the Magnificent Mile. "In my mind I was killin' that shit, but I know

I couldn't have been killin' that shit, 'cause I played 'Drop It Like It's Hot' like five times—it was hot back then," he says.

Within a few years, Sllime began earning money DJing dances at other schools and at bat and bar mitzvahs. Much of the local hip-hop scene was still off-limits to him due to his age. "We couldn't go up to the bars for real," he says. "We had to make other spaces to perform, like open mikes." On MySpace he connected with poet Nate Marshall, who'd begun hosting an open mike in Bronzeville and wanted a DJ for the series.

"When he first started DJing for us, he was very adamant that he was not a DJ—he was like, 'Nah nah nah, I'm not a DJ. I just got this DJing equipment,'" Marshall says. "He also had a million different names. He was always going through stage names—either the first one that I knew or the one that I knew him by best was 'Enfa Red.' And a lot of times we'd introduce him at shows as 'DJ I'm Really an MC.'" Sllime worked Marshall's open mike for a couple years and spun at others hosted by high schools, including Jones College Prep.

"He really is a man out of time, in terms of hip-hop and our current day, and I think this is one of the reasons why me and him connect so much," Marshall says. "In a moment where a lot of people were super into streetwear,

into being the most up on fashion, very image conscious, his insertion in that was, 'I don't give a fuck—I have been wearing this hoodie for I don't know how many days. I lost count.'" Sllime cared more about his work than about marketing it or himself, and that was one of the things that drew Marshall to him.

"One funny time—he called me, it must've been one or two in the morning," Marshall says. "He was like, 'I been doing acid. I talked to Jesus and he said that we gotta make rap songs together.'" They recorded a few tracks, and Marshall thinks one of them ended up online. Sllime had also been recording raps as part of a loose hip-hop collective called Wiggidies Crew; it launched in 2004 and also included a budding videographer named Jackson Duncan.

"Every day after school—after we were done freestyling in the hallways—we'd go to our homie Benny Nice's crib and sort of ruin his parents' day and take over his basement," Duncan says. "Sllime was an early MPC addict, and we would sample pretty much anything. We had really shitty keyboards and worn-out basses. It was a lot of organic sounds, but we made some really cool music out of it."

As the members of Wiggidies Crew began moving away for college in 2007 and 2008, they launched 119 Productions to catalog their solo recordings. "We would make these mixtapes with us individually on them and drop big compilations off this 119 website—119 became a hub for all our music and art projects," Duncan says.

School wasn't a big priority for Sllime. "I would show up to class without my backpack—I just didn't think about it," he says. "I would wake up and come to school with no backpack, and I'd be sittin' in class, like, 'Fuck! I forgot it again!' And then, 'How did you do this again?' I'm like, 'I don't know!' But somehow Imma ace the test. It's freaky." As graduation approached, he'd been hanging out with gang members and wasn't seriously considering college. "I was in tune with a bunch of muthafuckas—I was about to go one way with my life," he says. But some unsolicited advice convinced him to give higher education a shot. "The gangsters said, 'Howard is the shit—you should go to Howard. Don't be a dumbass,'" he says.

Sllime enrolled in Howard University in fall 2008. "Then junior year I got busted shippin' some weed," he says. He got three years of probation and left Howard in 2011. He returned to Chicago and gave school another shot, this time at DePaul. But Sllime bailed within a year to pursue music—in 2012 he teamed up with rapper-producer SolarFive of beat-making collective OnGaud, and they opened a studio



Green Sllime and Qari first met in 2012 at a studio Sllime had cofounded in the Music Garage.
 © DAVON CLARK

called the 406 in the Music Garage near Fulton Market. Among the early clients at their studio was the emerging crew Supreme Regime. It was the first time Sllime met Qari.

We're in such a weird fucking age, where people drop beautiful pieces of music and create amazing art and people forget about that shit a week later—it's like it didn't happen. I hope that doesn't happen with them. I think they have pretty sizable fan bases to support *Operation Hennessy*, to enshrine it, and make it be as special as it's gonna be to them. I think it's a standout project of the year. I hope when people look back on this year, this era, this is something that is mentioned.

—rapper-singer Rich Jones

Used to meditate,” Qari says. “There'd be times where I'd be somewhere with nothing, and feel like I had nothing, and feel like I was alone, and feel like no one cared about me. So I'd just close my eyes and breathe a little bit. And that became a habit and a practice.” During a deep meditation his junior year at Friedrich Von Steuben high school, he realized he wanted to give music a serious shot.

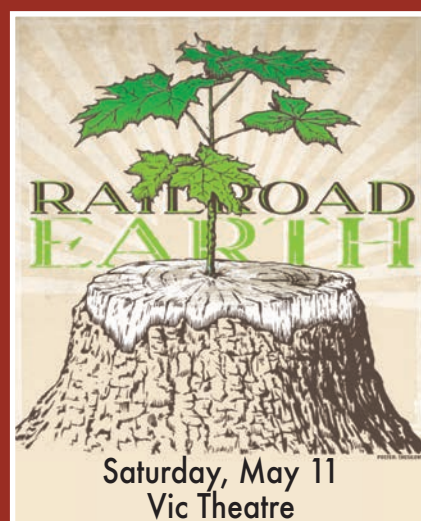
Qari grew up surrounded by music—his stepfather was a rap producer. “My earliest memories are, like, my stepfather making these dope-ass beats that were different,” he says. “They were manual and original. He wasn't doing a lot of sampling.”

Qari's first experience making music was in seventh grade: he learned rhythm guitar, inspired by playing *Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock*. But when he was 15, during his freshman year at Von Steuben, he discovered other people his age making rap songs. “I heard Kids These Days and Vic,” he says. “I was like, ‘Damn, kids make music? Young people make music?’” He met a senior, Will Is Chillin', who invited Qari to his house in Logan Square to record a solo session.

“He'll tell people I helped him figure out how to rap,” Will says. “But he knew how to rap way before—he came in rapping.” Even back then Will could hear what was distinctive about Qari. “His flow definitely went all over the place,” he says. “His whole vibe is real chill, for someone so young.”

Will had a rudimentary setup. “He had fuckin' FruityLoops, and he would make ➔

jam presents





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with special guest Sons of the Never Wrong

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Erwin Helfer / Elsa Harris / Pastor Donald Gay

In Szold Hall

SUNDAY, APRIL 28 3PM

Mary Flower

In Szold Hall

SUNDAY, APRIL 28 7PM

Cheryl Wheeler

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beats on FruityLoops and rap on them in FruityLoops,” Qari says. He doesn’t remember his own early attempts fondly either. “The raps sound like a 15-year-old wrote ‘em, but at the time, kids were like, ‘Oh man, I hear that song you dropped, kinda cool! You decent!’” Though he won over lots of classmates with those recordings, his microcelebrity didn’t exactly create a community. “When I started rapping, people started calling me Carl,” he says. “One of my homies started calling me Carl, and then everybody started calling me Carl—I never told anyone to call me Carl.” The name stuck for years.

Qari joined Supreme Regime his sophomore year. His tenure barely overlapped with that of Smoko Ono, who’s since become one of Save Money’s most important beat makers—both of them contributed to Supreme’s debut, 2012’s *Sloane Peterson*.

Devin Smith, better known as producer Mulatto Beats, was also part of the group at the time. “It was kind of hectic, ‘cause it was four rappers and two producers,” he says. “We were getting some good opportunities—we did a little stint, a college tour, with Kids These Days and Chance the Rapper. We did Madison and all these shows, but Qari used to get in trouble so much he would get grounded, so he couldn’t even come.”

Supreme Regime fizzled out in summer 2013. By then Qari had finished his junior year and quit high school, and his disappointed parents asked him to move out. “I slept in a garage one night. One night I slept in the park. One night I slept in my friend’s backyard,” he says. “I was a teenager, though, so it’s like, ‘Hey, can I sleep at your crib?’ ‘Sure!’ Maybe you’ll get a few days vacation at a friend’s house and nobody knows you’re homeless. It wasn’t, like, a proper homeless—I was a kid, so I felt free.” That same year, though, at age 17, he learned he was going to be a father, so he began to mend his relationships with his family. He moved in with one of his grandmothers, and in 2014 he got his GED.

On New Year’s Day 2014, Qari and Devin launched Hurt Everybody with rapper-singer Frederick McCulloch-Burton, aka Supa Bwe. The group soon consumed Qari’s life. “We had a studio to ourselves, and we spent all of our waking life in there,” he says. “I remember I would walk out of the studio, it’s nighttime. I would go back in, I would come back out, it’s nighttime, and I had been in there for hours and hours and hours and hours.” Supa made sure they were productive. “I had Freddy to be like a fuckin’ drill sergeant,” Qari says. “He taught me how to put my head down.”

In fall 2013, Devin had started interning for SolarFive at the 406, and Hurt Everybody worked out of another studio in the Music Garage. When the group took off, its members would swing by the 406 during breaks in their marathon sessions. Sllime and Qari had already met, but now they began to develop an appreciation for each other’s work. “I like what he does,” Qari says. “We’re not bad at what we do.”

“I was always like, ‘He can rap,’” Sllime says. “I always thought he was tight, before I knew him.”

I love Operation Hennessy. . . . There’s a lot of old-school sensibility in how Sllime makes stuff—I can hear, “Oh yeah, he chopped this on an MPC.” One of his heroes is Wu-Tang—I can hear that approach, that meeting of analog and digital in how the production is crafted, how things are moving from song to song. And Qari can rap that ass off.

—poet Nate Marshall

Qari and Sllime have spent so much time working in studios that the weeks and months have blurred together. “Pretty much 2014 to 2018 are all one year,” Qari says.

“We lived the same day, over and over, for four years straight,” Sllime says. “Maybe the same three days, because sometimes we would go to parties and shit.”

Mick Jenkins frequented the 406 to record with the OnGaud collective, who contributed to six songs on his 2014 breakthrough, *The Water[s]*. Mick got close to Sllime in that space. “I came in the studio one day, and he was rockin’ the turntables,” Mick says. “I’m like, ‘Wait, you DJ for real?’ He’s like, ‘Yeah, I DJed first.’ I was like, ‘Why haven’t I been fucking around with this guy?’ Instantly, he was my DJ.” As Mick’s star rose, Sllime spent more and more time on the road.

In June 2015, 119 Productions and Chicago creative agency FDC released the compilation mixtape *Chicago Sight ‘n Sound: Part 2*, which includes the song “Ghosts,” a collaboration between Hurt Everybody and Sllime. After Hurt Everybody broke up in early 2016, Devin and Qari continued to collaborate, and they’d frequently work in close proximity to Sllime. “Me and Sllime are always around each other making beats, so Qari’s always in the background freestyling,” Devin says. “Once they started doing their thing, it was kind of like, ‘Oh yeah,

this is perfect for Qari, ‘cause Qari got roots in the boom-bap stuff.”

Sllime would set aside certain instrumentals for specific rappers he knew, but he almost always tested out new material on Qari first. “Also, when it’s something I can’t fit to nobody, Imma send it to him ‘cause he gonna figure something out,” Sllime says.

By fall 2017, Sllime and Qari had decided to make a record together. That September, Sllime sent Qari a somnambulant beat and then tweeted a two-minute laptop-shot video of him rapping over it—the first public reveal of what eventually became the title track to *Operation Hennessy*. Its name references *The Life Aquatic*, specifically Steve Zissou’s plan to “borrow” equipment from an undersea lab belonging to his rival, Alistair Hennessey. By that point Qari and Sllime knew they were onto something big—they’d already completed three other songs that would end up on *Operation Hennessy*. Qari had performed a version of “Pony” on the fourth episode of *Broke Ass Low Budget Show*, which came out in February 2017. The final recording includes the project’s only guest rapper, Mick Jenkins.

“It was supposed to be my song,” Mick says. “Sllime is a hoarder, low-key—that was one of the ones in the vault, and they were just like, ‘Yo, can we use this?’ I’m like, ‘Bro, yeah, whatever.’” Mick sees *Operation Hennessy* as a turning point for Sllime in particular. “It’s the beginning of an era,” Mick says. “To me it seems like that first window into . . . finally, he’s gotten to a place where he’s ready to release music. I’m just excited for people to understand the type of artist that he actually is.”

Sllime turned that corner in large part because he clicks so well with Qari. In March 2019, during a stopover in Sweden on Mick’s European tour, Sllime put together half a dozen beats in his hotel room, using samples captured from the radio with a Teenage Engineering OP-1 mini synthesizer. He played them for other rappers, but when no one bit, he started to worry that he’d made something too odd. So he included some of them in a batch of eight songs he e-mailed Qari at the beginning of April. The next day, Qari sent back vocals he’d just recorded for one of Sllime’s favorite beats. “I woke up at 6:30 or 7 and wrote that song in bed still,” Qari says. “I just wrote it, and I wrote it honestly.”

“Some of the raps be like stream-of-consciousness—you feel like you open up a door and just peekin’ into thoughts rambling and racin’ and shit,” Sllime says. “It’s a perfect fit for my beat.” 📌

🐦 @imLeor

PICK OF THE WEEK

Billy Bragg looks “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back” in a three-night Chicago stand



JACOB BLICKENSTAFF

BILLY BRAGG

Thu 4/25 through Sat 4/27, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 2424 N. Lincoln, \$45. 18+

WITH HIS INSTANTLY recognizable voice—stark, blustery, and heartfelt—Billy Bragg has always had a no-frills musical style. His innovativeness manifests mostly in his career path. Also a historian and lefty activist, for the past two decades Bragg has often worn all of his hats at once, whether re-creating unfinished Woody Guthrie songs in collaboration with Wilco, Natalie Merchant, and Guthrie's daughter Nora; writing new lyrics for Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*; mastering the Spotify playlist format as a sort of front porch; or collaborating with Joe Henry on an album of old-time railroad songs (recorded at train stations during a cross-country journey). Always surprising, never gimmicky, Bragg has also been an outspoken anti-Brexit campaigner and the author of nonfiction books such as *The Progressive Patriot* and *Roots, Radicals and Rockers*. (The latter, about the history and influence of skiffle, was adapted into a BBC documentary.) For his 2019 tour, titled “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back,” he's playing three-night stands in select cities. The first night is Bragg's current set, spanning his career from the beginning through 2017's *Bridges Not Walls*. The second set, focusing on the early years, draws from Bragg's raw, punk-inflected first three albums, and the third set includes songs from his pop-tinged late-80s and early-90s albums *Workers Playtime*, *Don't Try This at Home*, and *William Bloke*. —MONICA KENDRICK

THURSDAY 25

BILLY BRAGG See *Pick of the Week* at left. See also *Friday and Saturday*, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 2424 N. Lincoln, \$45. 18+

GUERRILLA TOSS, BLACKER FACE, GOOD WILLSMITH 8 PM, *Sleeping Village*, 3734 W. Belmont, \$15. 21+

Guerilla Toss are down with the Grateful Dead. In an impassioned Facebook post from July 2015, the New York-based band threw laurels upon a group they called “the first ‘DIY’ band,” noting that the Dead used harsh noise in the 1960s and brandished modular synthesizers throughout the '70s. Like the Dead, Guerilla Toss combine a spirit of experimentation with a rugged DIY ethos and a penchant for lobbing undeniable hooks into unsuspecting ears. Their newest album, 2018's psychedelic stunner *Twisted Crystal* (DFA), demonstrates their singular outlook, oscillating between whimsy and profundity; at this show, the band will surely complement technical rigor with their knack for improvisation. They're sharing the bill with two Chicago groups, Good Willsmith and Blacker Face. **Good Willsmith** guitarist (and avowed Deadhead) Doug Kaplan will contribute Jerry Garcia-influenced shredding to the textural singing, keyboards, and electronics provided by bandmates Natalie Chami and Max Allison. And Afropunk quintet **Blacker Face**, while no strangers to the far-out, are one of the tightest bands this author has seen. Singers Jolene Whatever and P.T. Bell are dynamic and precise but unafraid to tread into more caustic territory, providing additional bite to a night of forward-thinking sounds. —JORDAN REYES

MAKAYA MCCRAVEN *Resavoir* opens. 8:30 PM, *Empty Bottle*, 1035 N. Western, \$15. 21+

By now, the distinctive methods with which jazz drummer Makaya McCraven composes albums are well-known. Many of us learned about his prowess as a producer from 2015's *In the Moment*, an expansive double LP on which McCraven spliced together parts from more than two dozen of his

live sets to form a cohesive, free-flowing groove that lands somewhere between improvisation and composition—the tracks sound even more effortless and multicomponent than when they were performed live. It's a pretty brilliant approach for any improviser, and his newest album, last October's *Universal Beings* (International Anthem), confirms McCraven as one of Chicago's most exciting musical minds. Culled from sessions recorded in New York, Chicago, London, and Los Angeles, the record's 22 tracks melt one into the next, so that the frenetic nine-minute jam “Atlantic Black” can transition into the decelerated “Inner Flight” can transition into the hazy, sauntering “Wise Man, Wiser Woman” without a hint of a seam. It'll be a rare treat to see him perform at the Empty Bottle.

—KEVIN WARWICK

TERRY REID *Railheart* opens. 8 PM, *SPACE*, 1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston, \$18. 18+

“There are only three things happening in England,” Aretha Franklin was quoted as saying in 1968. “The Rolling Stones, the Beatles, and Terry Reid.” Few have had careers as simultaneously high-flying and underappreciated as Reid's. One of rock's greatest vocalists, he began singing as a teen with R&B bands, including Peter Jay & the Jaywalkers, who supported the Stones in 1966, leading Graham Nash to score them a record deal with Columbia. Reid then signed with pop Svengali Mickie Most (Donovan, Herman's Hermits) for two solo albums and embarked on a U.S. tour with Cream in 1968. Things got really heavy when Jimmy Page famously asked Reid to join his band the New Yardbirds. Already committed to opening a Stones tour, Reid recommended a singer from the Band of Joy, whom he'd recently seen play: Robert Plant. He also put in a good word for the group's drummer, John Bonham. The New Yardbirds became Led Zeppelin, and Reid returned to the road with Fleetwood Mac and Jethro Tull. He joined the Stones again on the tour that culminated in the disastrous Altamont show in 1969, though he missed that particular date. In 1969 Reid also turned down an offer to front Deep Purple, and in his own work he began to drift away from rock conventions—marking the beginning of what many consider his career peak. Reid's third solo album, 1973's *River*, sold poorly at the time ➔



Makaya McCraven

DAVID MARQUES

MUSIC

continued from 29

but is now recognized as a genre-defying rural/psychedelic/jazz/folk/soul/Latin-tinged classic on par with Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks*. His next LP, the Graham Nash-produced *Seed of Memory*, was on a similar plane, but ABC Records filed for bankruptcy the week it was released and the album ended up buried in time. Since then, the only new material Reid has released has been 1979's soul-rockin' *Rogue Waves* and 1991's new-wave-influenced *The Driver*. His live appearances have been even more sporadic. The most recent time the 69-year-old Reid played Chicago was more than a decade ago—so if you want to see a true legend, who in some parallel universe is doubtless as big as the rock stars he's been associated with, this might be your last chance. —STEVE KRAKOW

FRIDAY 26

ALL SMILES SEVEN-YEAR ANNIVERSARY AND FINALE Tomorrow Kings headline; Psalm One, Green Sllime, Encyclopedia Brown, Moodie Black, SCC, and DJ Elliven open. For more on Green Sllime (and his collaborator Qari), see the story on page 25. 9 PM, Tonic Room, 2447 N. Halsted, \$10. 21+

No other series has done as much to demonstrate the breadth and depth of contemporary Chicago hip-hop as All Smiles. Launched seven years ago by rapper-singer Rich Jones, the intergenerational monthly showcase says goodbye tonight with a lineup that speaks to its long history of bringing together locals from different cliques and eras. Jones began All Smiles as a vehicle for his rap trio, SCC, which is now mostly defunct but makes a rare reunion appearance to open this show. Headliners Tomorrow Kings (currently one DJ and seven MCs, including the ferocious Lamon Manuel) are underground heroes who have inspired waves of local artists, Jones among them. Penultimate performer Psalm One has been one of the most celebrated rappers in the city since she emerged in 2000, and Jones, now 31, saw her perform at the first rap show he attended, when he was just 15. Rapper-producer Encyclopedia Brown, who cut his teeth in the battle scene in the 90s, has backed Psalm on the turntables; his work with local label Machine Wash Music provides a road map for how rap art-

ists can mature in a form that's historically associated with youth. Rapper-producer Green Sllime is a powerful contributor to the local scene, though he's best known for a supporting role—he's served as Mick Jenkins's live DJ for the past half decade. But Sllime's position as host of 119 Productions' YouTube talk show *Broke Ass Low Budget Show* and his grimy full-length with rapper Qari, February's *Operation Hennessy*, have brought him some overdue shine. Noisy Los Angeles rap group Moodie Black is the lone nonlocal act on the bill—but, as All Smiles has shown, Chicago has room in its heart for anyone who has something to say. —LEOR GALIL

BILLY BRAGG See *Pick of the Week*, page 29. See also Thursday and Saturday. 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 2424 N. Lincoln, \$45. 18+

ALICE MERTON Parker Bossley opens. 7:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, 1375 W. Lake, sold out. 18

Europe was way ahead of the United States with Alice Merton: Her 2016 single "No Roots" made it to number two on the German charts in 2017 and charted all over the continent—including in France, Italy, Belgium, and Poland—before finally hitting the American market hard last year. If you've heard the song's opening riff and percussive chorus, you know why the Germans call it an *Ohrwurm*: "I've got no roots / But my home was never on the ground." Merton says she wrote "No Roots" while visiting her parents in England and realizing she didn't feel at home anywhere. Born in Germany, Merton moved with her family a dozen times while growing up—including to the U.S., Canada, and England—thanks to her Irish-born father's occupation (and her parents' wanderlust). Along the way she began playing piano and guitar, took singing lessons, and learned songwriting, earning a degree from the Popakademie Baden-Württemberg, a German public music conservatory. Though Merton's guitar-driven (and often autobiographical) songs and soaring vocals have garnered her comparisons to artists such as Florence & the Machine, record labels didn't seem to know how to peg her music—so Merton and her manager founded their own outfit, Paper Plane, and issued "No Roots" as a single. She included the song on a five-track EP in 2017 (after signing with Mom + Pop Music) as well as on her first full-length album, *Mint*, which came out in January 2019. This year

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SECRET HISTORY OF CHICAGO MUSIC

PIVOTAL CHICAGO MUSICIANS THAT SOMEHOW HAVE NOT GOTTEN THEIR JUST DUES by PLASTIC CRIMEWAVE

THE Infinitives

JUST WHEN I THOUGHT I MIGHT'VE COVERED EVERY ONE OF CHICAGO-LAND'S COS GARAGE BANDS, LOCAL GARAGE HISTORIAN ROBERT DUCH-HOLZ TOLD ME ABOUT THE INFINITIVES—A TEEN GROUP FROM DES PLAINES WHOSE LONE SINGLE IS AMONG THE MOST COLLECTIBLE RECORDS THE GENRE PRODUCED. IN 1963, 12-YEAR-OLDS MARTIN COURTOIS AND DENIS O'NEIL PICKED UP GUITARS, SWEEPED UP BY THE BRITISH INVASION, AND STARTED JAMMING WITH RAY SCHLEICHERT, WHO ONLY HAD A SNARE DRUM AND A HI-HAT. RAY SOON SWITCHED TO ORGAN, AND DRUMMER RICK ROESSING AND GUITARIST-VOCALIST TOM NAVRATIL JOINED. AFTER O'NEIL LEFT, COURTOIS BECAME LEAD GUITARIST, AND WHEN JIM SEMITEKOL CAME ABOARD ON BASS, THE INFINITIVES WERE COMPLETE. THE BAND STARTED PLAYING SCHOOL DANCES & TEEN CLUBS SUCH AS THE HUT IN DES PLAINES & THE DEEP END IN PARK RIDGE. SCHLEICHERT'S PARENTS OWNED ROCKY'S IN DES PLAINES, WHERE THE INFINITIVES REHEARSED & GIGGED—AND WHERE A NEIGHBOR WITH MUSICAL ASPIRATIONS, RECENT SOUTHERN TRANSPLANT HARRY WEST, HEARD THEM. HE'D WRITTEN 2 COUNTRY-ISH SONGS & DECIDED HE'D FOUND THE BAND TO RECORD THEM. THE INFINITIVES, UNINTERESTED IN COUNTRY, REWORKED HIS TUNES FOR A SUMMER 1966 RECORDING SESSION AT KAHILL RECORDING IN ARLINGTON HEIGHTS. "WE DID BOTH SONGS IN ONE DAY," COURTOIS REMEMBERS. "WE ALL SET UP IN ONE BIG ROOM & RECORDED EVERYTHING AT ONCE, JUST LIKE WE WERE PLAYING LIVE." WEST PRESSED AROUND 1,000 COPIES OF "HEIDI" B/W "THOUSAND TEARS," WHICH THE BAND SOLD FOR \$1 AT GIGS. NOW ACKNOWLEDGED AS A CLASSIC, IT'S BEEN SOLD FOR AS MUCH AS \$1,000, EVEN THOUGH BOTH TUNES WERE REISSUED ON CRYPT RECORDS' "LAST OF THE GARAGE PUNK UNKNOWN" COMPILATIONS IN 2015. THE INFINITIVES LASTED TILL 1968: THEIR FAMILIES SOURED ON WEST, THE BAND'S DE FACTO MANAGER, AFTER THEY GOT DRUNK AT HIS PAD, AND SEMITEKOL'S PARENTS MADE HIM QUIT. COURTOIS WAS KICKED OUT FOR NOT HAVING A BIG ENOUGH AMP, AND THOUGH THE OTHER THREE MEMBERS PLAYED TOGETHER BRIEFLY UNDER ANOTHER NAME, THE INFINITIVES' SHORT SAGA HAD ENDED.

—BIG THANKS TO MARTIN C & BOB B!

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Alice Merton COURTESY OF ARTIST

Merton, who's still just 25, has watched her songs climb the *Billboard* charts while she's toured Europe and the U.S., including a recent stop at Coachella. Living out of suitcases comes naturally to a woman who now splits her time between Germany and England—a good thing for her, because it looks like she's got a lot of road left. —KIRSTEN LAMBERT

SNAKETIME: THE MUSIC OF MOONDOG
Dustin Laurenzi leads a band featuring Matt Ulery, Phil Sudderberg, Quin Kirchner, Dave Miller, Chad McCullough, Jason Stein, and Nick Mazzarella. 9 PM, Hungry Brain, 2319 W. Belmont, \$10. 21+

Even by New York City standards, Louis “Moondog” Hardin (1916-1999) was a character. For a quarter century beginning in the late 1940s, his blind, hirsute form occupied a spot on Sixth Avenue. Sometimes he performed or sold his music, and other times he just stood there, looking imposing in Viking garb. His music included proto-minimalist orchestral pieces and short, intricate rounds that sounded like a glee club vocalizing over Native American rhythms, which Moondog had become enamored with as a child while visiting an Arapaho reservation in Wyoming. Chicago tenor saxophonist Dustin Laurenzi (who leads Natural Language, cofounded Twin Talk, and plays with Bon Iver) was first drawn to Moondog's quirks, but his interpretations of the composer's music show deep respect for its

ingratiating melodies and exacting structures. Laurenzi has assembled an eclectic array of jazz musicians, some of whom don't play together in any other setting, to realize these arrangements. Bassist Matt Ulery and drummers Ryan Packard and Quin Kirchner add muscular syncopation to the Arapaho-inspired grooves. Guitarist Dave Miller and a horn section that includes bass clarinetist Jason Stein, alto saxophonist Nick Mazzarella, and trumpeter Chad McCullough transform Moondog's brief, interlocking themes into launching pads for open-ended improvisations that occasionally veer toward dissonance (which the composer likely would not have countenanced) while amplifying their joyfulness. This concert celebrates the release of *Snaketime: The Music of Moondog* (Astral Spirits), recorded at the Hungry Brain in 2018. Drummer Phil Sudderberg subs for an absent Packard. —BILL MEYER

SATURDAY27

BILLY BRAGG See *Pick of the Week*, page 29.
See also Thursday and Friday. 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 2424 N. Lincoln, \$45. 18+

CRUDE S.S. *Riotous, HenryxChinaski, and Warfilth open. 6:30 PM, Subterranean downstairs, 2011 W. North, \$12. 17+*

History has been so indifferent to Swedish hardcore pioneers Crude S.S. (short for “Society System”) that when the trio's own members get a little foggy on the details, it's hard to find any evidence to clear things up. The official Facebook page for this fiercely subversive band—who made a kiss-off song about our money-grubbing society called “Destroy Capitalism”—says the group formed in 1980, but earlier this month they began selling T-shirts emblazoned with the words “Swedish HC since 1979.” (Meanwhile, Discogs says 1982.) Before dissolving in the mid-80s, Crude S.S. released the crusty, feral 1985 EP *Who'll Survive* and, perhaps most crucially, contributed two songs to *Cleanse the Bacteria*, a 1985 compilation assembled by scene legend Pushead that also features the likes of Corrosion of Conformity, 7 Seconds, and Poison Idea. Crude S.S. has a wild, vicious, grimy sound (similar to influential Swiss metal band Hellhammer), and because their material has barely been officially released, it's been bootlegged nonstop around the world for decades—band members occasionally post on Facebook about recently discovered unofficial releases. Fortunately, there are ways to acquire this music legitimately, notably 2012's *Killing for Nothing* ➔

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L7
 LE BUTCHERETTES

FRIDAY MAY 24 / 7PM / ALL AGES
 Noisy presents
BASEMENT / NOTHING

SATURDAY MAY 25 / 11:30PM / 21+
 Joe Fiore presents
FURBALL: CHICAGO

WEDNESDAY MAY 29 / 9PM / 18+
NICK MURPHY
 FKA CHET FAKER

06/08 NAILS
 06/14 KNUCKLE PUCK & CITIZEN
 06/15 DUMPSTAPHUNK
 06/18 YEASAYER
 06/19 BAD BOOKS
 06/21 BONELANG
 06/29 PELICAN
 07/28 JAWBOX
 08/17 THE BOUNCING SOULS
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 11/01 PETER HOOK & THE LIGHT

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 DOC LINK
 AARON BROOKS
 TESH / ZACK JOSEPH
 ALEJANDRO

FRIDAY APR 26
 VIRGIL ABLOH (DJ SET)
 HIJO PRÓDIGO
 DASANI BOYS

SATURDAY APR 27
 These Things Take Time with
 URULU / B. HAYES

SUNDAY APR 28
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MUSIC

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continued from 31

(Distortion), which brought Crude S.S.'s sometimes thrashy antifascist screeds all the way to Spotify. Tonight's performance is part of a rare stateside tour, and though I hate that it still needs saying, I'm hoping they play "Nazi Go Home." —LEOR GALIL

ERWIN HELFER, ELSA HARRIS, DONALD GAY
7 PM, Szold Music and Dance Hall, Old Town
School of Folk Music, 4545 N. Lincoln, \$22.

Local label the Sirens has long upheld the tradition of Chicago blues piano, and in the past decade or so it's begun exploring the neglected world of gospel piano as well. This show features three artists in the Sirens stable, two with new releases. **Elsa Harris's** *I Thank God* is a mostly instrumental collection of well-traveled church standards featuring Harris on piano, Richard Gibbs on organ, and Curtis Fondren on drums. They sail through the likes of "Lord Don't Move That Mountain" (originally recorded by the late Inez Andrews, to whom this release is dedicated), "Just a Closer Walk With Thee," and "Down by the Riverside," the absence of vocals emphasizing the quality of the musicianship. The lone vocal track, "Looking for Trouble," is a bit of a shock; Harris sings with cocky authority, almost daring Satan to cross her path. Pastor **Donald Gay**, by contrast, puts his vocals at the center of his new *On a Glorious Day*. Gay's previous recording, also on the Sirens, was a joint effort with his sister, pianist Geraldine Gay, who's since passed on. Donald is still with us, though, boasting a strong set of pipes, and he's working with a full band rather than a lone piano. (Two of his players are Gibbs and Fondren, also from Harris's album.) Gay has one of those classic singing voices that resonates without seeming to shout, and adapting to a full rhythm section doesn't faze him a bit—he cuts loose without strain. The night ends with Chicago blues trea-

sure **Erwin Helfer**, now 83. He's played with everyone from Mama Yancey to Michael Bloomfield while establishing his own reputation as one of the finest blues pianists working. —JAMES PORTER

ORIGINAL MISFITS *Fear, Venom Inc., and Power Trip* open. 7:30 PM, Allstate Arena, 6920 Mannheim, Rosemont, \$59.75-\$174.75.

Hands-down the funniest moment of 2016 happened at Riot Fest, during the insanely hyped reunion of Misfits members Glenn Danzig, Jerry Only, and Doyle Wolfgang von Frankenstein. In the middle of an uncomfortably long stretch of between-song banter, while the front man explained how he thought the giant glowing pumpkins on the stage were "cool as shit," someone behind me cupped his hands around his mouth and shouted at the top of his lungs, "Shut up, Danzig!" It was the perfect encapsulation of how ridiculous the entire thing was: three men in their 50s and 60s, caked in face paint, wrapped in pleather and mesh, who'd spent the past three decades fighting with one another like children, were finally together in front of thousands of rabid fans, and all Danzig could muster were comments about cool pumpkins and how his "fuckin' zipper keeps falling down." Luckily, the original Misfits have one of the most gloriously perfect discographies in the history of punk rock to lean on, so when they weren't awkwardly rambling and looking goofy, the estranged bandmates—reunited for the first time since 1983 and backed by former Slayer drummer Dave Lombardo—could click back into their ragged glory days and play the favorites for a crowd screaming along to all of their signature whoa-ohs. It was as beautiful and thrilling as it was hilarious. If you missed the reunion of the Misfits at Riot Fest, you would be out of your mind to miss this. It'll be pure joy for any fan of classic punk. —LUCA CIMARUSTI

TUESDAY30

EMILY REO *Foxes in Fiction* open. 9:30 PM, Hideout, 1354 W. Wabansia, \$8. 21+

For 2013's *Olive Juice*, Brooklyn singer-songwriter Emily Reo made detailed, intimate songs with what sounds like a small symphony of toy instruments powered by nine-volt batteries. She went even bigger with her third album, the new *Only You Can See It* (Carpark): though Reo has retained her home-recorded approach, she's fleshed out a full-band sound while playing almost every note herself. The percussion thunders louder; heavy, distorted guitar steps into the foreground; and her glimmering voice is multitracked in pristine layers worthy of radio pop. This outside sound underscores Reo's lyrical themes, which often address struggles bigger than any one person—though her performances also suggest the small ways people can overcome day-to-day obstacles. When she sings about mansplaining on "Strawberry," her clear-eyed delivery almost makes you hope it'll be eradicated in a generation. —LEOR GALIL

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GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

IF YOU'RE LIKE Gossip Wolf, the words “folk festival” conjure up earnest imitators of Joan Baez and pre-electric Dylan. Those artists are cool—but “I Gave My Love a Cherry” is for smashing guitars like John Belushi in *Animal House*. The **Maypole Folk Festival** solves this problem by booking diverse bills with the likes of Chicago Afrobeat Project, the Golden Horse Ranch Band, and the Golosa Russian Choir. The fourth annual fest, at the **Empty Bottle** all day Saturday, April 27, includes folkie **Sam Amidon**, the honky-tonkin’ **Western Elstons**, Rami Gabriel’s Middle Eastern ensemble **Arabic Xhama**, and the **Girls of the Golden West**—aka Marydee Reynolds, Amalea Tshilds, and Elyse Bergman re-creating the music Reynolds’s great-aunt played in the 1930s.

When Chicago R&B legend **Andre Williams** died in March, *Reader* contributor **James Porter** eulogized him as an “erupting volcano”—Williams filled his decades-long comeback with fiery performances and memorable stage banter. On Sunday, April 28, the **Hideout** hosts a tribute to Williams with his longtime backing band the Goldstars and guests such as **Renaldo Domino**, **Bailey Dee**, and members of Poi Dog Pondering and the Mekons. The show benefits Englewood nonprofit **I Grow Chicago**, and Porter will spin a DJ set.

This month Chicago dance producer **Please** launched his **Issa Party** label with **Catch Me**, an EP by Teklife’s **Nate Boylan**. The footwork master applies his tense but celebratory style to other club sounds on its four songs—the effervescent title track belongs on everybody’s summer house mix. The EP is available only via Bandcamp.

Time flies—it’s been ten years since Chicago rap blog **Ruby Hornet** launched its **Closed Sessions** label with Curren\$y’s “Rapper Weed.” On Friday, April 26, Closed Sessions marks that milestone with the first vinyl release of its 2010 compilation **Closed Sessions Vol. 1**—a time capsule of blog-era rap and late-aughts Chicago hip-hop. —**J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL**

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip.Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.

CHICAGO SHOWS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IN THE WEEKS TO COME

ALL AGES FREE



Oleta Adams COURTESY OF ARTIST

NEW

Mindi Abair & the Boneshakers 8/16, 8 PM, City Winery

Acquaintances, Gnarboyz 6/8, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Oleta Adams 7/25, 8 PM, City Winery

Dave Alvin 7/11, 8 PM, City Winery

Aly & AJ, Armors 5/5, 7 PM, House of Blues

Anberlin 6/29, 7:30 PM; 6/30, 6:30 PM, House of Blues

Animals As Leaders, Contortionist, Buke and Gase 5/16, 8 PM, House of Blues, 17+

Ataris 6/18, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

Mickey Avalon & Dirt Nasty 6/21, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, on sale Fri 4/26, 10 AM, 17+

Sara Bareilles 10/15, 8 PM, United Center

Bars of Gold 6/29, 9 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+

BBMak 5/15, 9:30 PM, House of Blues Back Porch Stage, 17+

Benny Sings 9/10, 8 PM, Sleeping Village

Best Coast 6/11, 8:30 PM; 6/12, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 4/26, 10 AM

Black Bear Combo, Les Vikq, Hodges and Hodges 5/16, 9:30 PM, Hideout

Bloodyminded, Aseethe, Ikaray, Stander 5/25, 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village

Kath Bloom, Moon Bros. 5/2, 9:30 PM, Hideout

Jaimie Branch's Fly or Die with Lester St. Louis/Jason Ajemian/Chad Taylor 5/6, 7 and 9:30 PM, Dorian's

Brook and the Bluff, Jamie Drake 5/4, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+

Jim Campilongo Trio 9/5, 8 PM, Hungry Brain, on sale Fri 4/26, 10 AM

Mary Chapin Carpenter &

Shawn Colvin 10/18, 8 PM, Athenaeum Theatre

Cher, Nile Rodgers & Chic 11/27, 7:30 PM, United Center

Matt Corby 10/9, 7:30 PM, Park West, on sale Fri 4/26, 10 AM, 18+

Chick Corea & Béla Fleck 5/3, 7 and 9:30 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music

Damned, X, Detroit Cobras 5/30, 8 PM, House of Blues, 17+

Dead Sun, Grivo, Moss Jaw, Kodakrome 5/19, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+

Deadmau5, Lights 2/1/20, 7 PM, Navy Pier, 18+

Demob Happy 5/8, 7 PM, Cobra Lounge

Deanna Devore, Fay Ray, Corboba 7/11, 8:30 PM, Sleeping Village

DMX 5/4, 8 PM, House of Blues

Dropkick Murphys, Clutch 9/30, 6:45 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 17+

Emarosa, Lizzy Farrall 6/7, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+

Falling in Reverse 5/12, 5:30 PM, House of Blues

Chris Forsyth & the Broken Mirrors Motel Band 7/13, 9:30 PM, Hideout

Gabby's World, Bellows 7/9, 8 PM, Empty Bottle

Gasolina Party 5/17, 9 PM, House of Blues, 17+

Gesaffelstein 11/16, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, on sale Fri 4/26, 10 AM, 18+

Girls Rock! Chicago Camp Carnival with White Mystery, Half Gringa, Baby Money 5/19, 7 PM, Sleeping Village

God Awful Small Affairs, Bernie & the Wolf, Lettering, Lili 6/2, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Gotobeds, Greys, Ethers 6/21, 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village

Great Grandpa 7/8, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+

Growlers 9/6, 7:30 PM; 9/7, 7:30 PM, Metro, on sale Fri 4/26, 10 AM

Meagan Hickman, Shades, Sarah Marie Young 5/15, 7:30 PM, Sleeping Village

I Am, Orthodox, Boundaries 6/19, 6:30 PM, Subterranean

Christone "Kingfish" Ingram 6/14, 11 PM, Schubas

Jack & Jack, Alec Bailey 5/3, 7:30 PM, House of Blues

Lyfe Jennings 7/13, 9 PM, House of Blues, 17+

Carly Rae Jepsen 7/9, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre

Jinjer, Browning 10/22, 6:45 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

Junoflo 6/1, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge

Avi Kaplan 8/18, 7:30 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 4/26, 10 AM

Khalid, Clairor 7/25, 7:30 PM, United Center

Wiz Khalifa, French Montana 7/27, 6 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, on sale Fri 4/26, 10 AM

King Buffalo 9/27, 9 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 4/26, 10 AM

Klaus Johann Grobe, Vinyl Williams 5/2, 9 PM, Beat Kitchen

Felix Kubin 5/30, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Zara Larsson, Astrid S 5/6, 7:30 PM, House of Blues

Greg Laswell 9/25, 8 PM, City Winery

Laundry Day 5/11, 6 PM, Subterranean

Lettuce, Ghost-Note 11/9, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, on sale Fri 4/26, 10 AM, 18+

Listener, Birds In Row 5/4, 7 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+

EARLY WARNINGS

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V103's Summer Block Party with Jill Scott, Anthony Hamilton 7/13, 6 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion

Wandering Boys 5/2, 6 PM, Hideout

Wavves 7/28, 9 PM, Subterranean, 17+

ZZ Top, Cheap Trick 9/7, 7 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park

UPCOMING

Academy of Mexican Dance and Music Cinco de Mayo Fiesta 5/5, 2 PM, Thalia Hall

Acid Dad 5/14, 9 PM, Empty Bottle

Adventure Club, Riot Ten, Tynan, Inzo 5/3, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+

Elastic Arts Second Annual Benefit 5/31, 7 PM, Elastic

Damien Escobar 5/11, 7:30 PM, Park West, 18+

Polo & Pan 9/17, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 4/26, 10 AM, 17+

Pro Teens, Heaven Honey, Fernando House 6/10, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Allan Rayman 6/1, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Jessica Risker, Her Crooked Heart, Xiao Yao 6/9, 7:30 PM, Hideout

Claire Rousay & Emily Beisel, Claire Rousay solo 5/6, 7:30 PM, Experimental Sound Studio

Alejandro Sanz 8/28, 7:30 PM, Rosemont Theater, Rosemont

Seaway, Free Throw, Heart Attack Man, Young Culture 5/5, 6 PM, Subterranean

Smoking Popes, Direct Hit!, Bad Cop Bad Cop, War on Women 5/11, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

Lucy Spraggan 6/25, 8 PM, Schubas, on sale Fri 4/26, 10 AM, 18+

Suicideboys, Shoreline Mafia, City Morgue, Germ, Night Lovell, Trash Talk 8/16, 6 PM, Aragon Ballroom

Thor, Knife of Simpson, Mexican Werewolf 5/3, 8 PM, Live Wire Lounge

Toad The Wet Sprocket 8/31, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 4/26, 10 AM, 17+

Katie Toupin 5/18, 7 PM, Schubas, 18+

T.S.O.L., Bollweevils, Mons, Kreutzer Sonata 5/31, 7 PM, Reggie's Music Joint

Howie Day, Emma Charles 5/16, 8 PM, City Winery

Hudson Taylor 5/25, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 18+

Hyde 5/19, 6 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+

Rad Trads 5/23, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+

Railroad Earth 5/11, 8 PM, The Vic, 18+

Kendrick Scott Oracle 5/2, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

Sego, Nectar 5/18, 10 PM, Schubas, 18+

Shed, Aurora Halal, Ariel Zetina 5/3, 10 PM, Smart Bar

Zveri 5/31, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+

GRASSROOTS

How #NoCopAcademy shook the machine

The coalition lost the vote but changed the narrative on police spending.

By **BENJI HART**

On March 13, Chicago’s City Council voted 38 to 8, with two abstentions, to approve a contract with mega-construction company AECOM for building an \$85 million police and fire training facility in the west side neighborhood of Garfield Park. The vote came at the end of an 18-month campaign, initiated by a coalition ultimately supported by over 100 local grassroots organizations, called #NoCopAcademy.

Directed by a core of Black youth, the multiracial, multigenerational cohort of researchers, organizers, educators, and artists united disparate demographics, far-flung neighborhoods, and diverse political ideologies in the demand that the city not further increase spending on its police department—which is already per capita one of the most well-funded in the nation—and instead repurpose those funds for resources that prevent violence, like high-quality public schools, affordable housing, and mental health care.

The #NoCopAcademy coalition failed to halt the city’s plans to pass the academy’s contract. But, like any grassroots campaign, the immediate call-to-action is only half the battle, and only half of how we assess victory. It is as important to take inventory of #NoCopAcademy’s long-term success as it is its short-term losses.

#NoCopAcademy centered the voices of those most impacted by our city’s cuts to education and hyperspending on mass incarceration—Black and brown young people. Youth from the south and west sides, many of them Austin and West Garfield Park residents, hosted weekly meetings, wrote public statements, held press conferences, led train takeovers, attended trainings and workshops, organized

die-ins—all with the purpose of determining their own messaging and distilling their own values. Dozens of teenagers developed into experienced organizers over the course of the year-and-a-half-long struggle, and were the backbone and unapologetic voice of the campaign. These youth are well-trained, fired up, and poised to take on new battles in their respective corners of Chicago.

The multiracial and multigenerational coalition brought together organizations that are often siloed in Chicago organizing. Communities that rarely interact—and have even historically been at odds—not only recognized the danger of the academy’s imminent construction, but the need to connect their struggles to resist it. From Muslim youth’s disruption of Rahm Emanuel’s Iftar dinner, to Black leaders joining Organized Communities Against Deportations to head the #ChingaLa-Migra march in the Loop. From queer Asian organization Invisible 2 Invincible bringing a #NoCopAcademy contingent to the Lunar New Year Parade, to young people from the south and west sides marching in Uptown against 46th Ward alderman James Cappleman, chair of the zoning committee, and uniting in the fight against school closings across Black neighborhoods. On the day of the budget committee’s final vote on the academy, members of Raise Your Hand IL and the Chicago Teachers Union linked arms with Black and brown youth to block elevators at City Hall, while west sides from Black Workers Matter spoke out against the misuse of TIF funds meant for their communities.

One hundred and five organizations from across the city stood together to state their support for the defunding of police and the increased funding of social services.

Most didn’t merely offer symbolic endorsements, but drew on their membership to throw down and speak up on behalf of the demands of youth organizers. This alone is a massive shift, and a monumental political achievement.

#NoCopAcademy also developed new tactics to fight the machine. Organizers canvassed 500 Garfield Park residents, then released a report demonstrating the lack of support for the academy and outlining the kinds of investments wanted in the neighborhood. When Black youth were barred from comment at public hearings, they sued the city and won a settlement, forcing 34th Ward alderman Carrie Austin, chair of the budget committee, to hold public comment at the next committee vote. They petitioned for government documents, and researched the flow of private money into aldermanic pockets. They led workshops for organizers and communities, educating many for the first time on the contours of local politics.

After a rare defer-and-publish maneuver delayed a vote on partial funding for the Cop Academy, Rahm Emanuel taunted organizers, telling the *Sun-Times*, “Between today and Friday . . . there’s not gonna be a vote change.” By the end of the campaign, 12 different aldermen abstained, deferred, or flat-out voted against at least one of the proposals for the academy—a stunning 24 percent of City Council—and both candidates in the mayoral runoff opposed aspects of the project. #NoCopAcademy studied the machine and shook it thoroughly without playing by its rules.

Chicago organizers who have led the national conversation on abolishing police and prisons can attest that the message of abolition has long been deemed too radical for mainstream political discussions—even those facilitated by the left. A deep-seated belief in the indispensability of carceral institutions, and concerns about what would replace them, have regularly drowned out the voices of communities with clear answers to these quandaries.

By jumping on the construction of the academy and highlighting the city’s hypocritical claims of being “broke” when it closed half its mental health clinics and 49 public schools only years prior, #NoCopAcademy provided a concrete example of the abolitionist politic in action, asking: Why can’t Chicago find money to heal and educate our communities, yet can always find money to police and incarcerate

them? What if we reversed the spending flow, divesting from the failed institution of policing, and investing in the support systems that can prevent crime and violence in the first place?

#NoCopAcademy helped illustrate abolition as common sense, and was a litmus test for “progressive” candidates’ true values. It challenged mainstream journalistic practices—which treat policing, education, and housing as separate conversations—demonstrating that a holistic approach to social and economic justice is the only answer to ending systemic violence. Multiple aldermanic races were won by candidates explicitly supporting #NoCopAcademy, a significant shift from just four years earlier when even progressive mayoral candidate Chuy Garcia ran on a platform of 1,000 more cops.

There are more battles ahead before the city can complete its plans for this hugely unpopular project. The academy has yet to be built. AECOM, the contracted company, has a lengthy history of overspending and defrauding governments. Temporary construction jobs promised by Alderman Emma Mitts to West Garfield Park residents have yet to materialize. But more importantly, the deep bonds built by this broad coalition are also prepared to support entirely new campaigns in a new Chicago.

With a total of five incoming aldermen who are Democratic Socialists of America-endorsed, the City Council arriving in May will look drastically different than the ones preceding it. And as battles for rent control, cops out of schools, and an emerging effort to stop Rahm Emanuel and his successor Lori Lightfoot from converting closed schools into police training facilities all begin to take shape, the city is facing a more mobilized and united front opposing plans for militarization and displacement.

#NoCopAcademy lost the final vote but changed the narrative on police spending and building long-term community safety. In so doing, they also won the hearts and minds of thousands who previously might have never imagined themselves fighting for the defunding of a corrupt, disgraced, and death-making institution. 

 @radfagg

Benji Hart is an author, artist, and educator living in Chicago, and an organizer with the #NoCopAcademy campaign.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA

Why the *Reader* is worth saving

The paper has provided a home to a long list of truth tellers.

By LEONARD C. GOODMAN

The embarrassing implosion of the Russiagate story, following two years of wall-to-wall coverage in the mainstream press, is yet another reminder why we can't rely on corporate media to deliver the news. For two years, corporate news outlets such as CNN, MSNBC, the *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post* have peddled gossip and misinformation about how Trump colluded with the Russians to steal the election.

None of this coverage had anything to do with the lives of most Americans, 80 percent of whom live paycheck to paycheck; if they have health insurance, they can't afford to get sick and pay their deductible.

America's mainline media is owned and controlled by six corporations. It should come as no surprise that media outlets beholden to corporations do not always serve the needs of ordinary people; nor are they effective watchdogs of a political system financed by the very same corporate interests.

The Russiagate affair consumed so much attention that MSNBC went almost a year without mentioning the war in Yemen, where the U.S. is actively helping the richest country in the Gulf, Saudi Arabia, destroy the poorest one, killing tens of thousands of Yemeni people through its brutal bombing campaign and the famine that that campaign is causing.

Another story drowned out in the sea of Russiagate coverage is that the United States is presently helping to overthrow the elected government of Venezuela in a brazen coup attempt—and on behalf of U.S. corporate interests eager to exploit the nation's oil resources. As Noam Chomsky observed, our me-

dia's endless obsession with a few Facebook ads purchased by Russians has made the U.S. a laughingstock to the hundreds of millions of people who live in countries where the U.S. has actually overthrown their democratically elected leaders and installed puppets who serve American corporate interests.

The Russiagate scam is far deadlier than just a case of news corporations peddling a phony spy story to attract viewers and readers. The corporate owners of mainstream media promote conflict and war for profit. NBC is owned by General Electric, a major defense contractor. And nearly every mainstream news outlet is sponsored by the war industry.

One of the least awful things about Trump was his promise to improve relations with nuclear-armed Russia. But the arms industry—that largely directs foreign policy through campaign contributions to both Democrats and Republicans, paid lobbyists and industry-funded think tanks—could not allow tensions to decrease. Peace may be good for the citizens of the earth, but it's terrible for business.

It's difficult to convince hardworking Americans to support trillion-dollar defense budgets to protect us from the Taliban and ISIS. A scary enemy with an actual military is a necessity. Anti-Russia hysteria has already set off a new arms race. Every single nuclear-armed country is building new weapons. NATO is expanding up to Russia's border—despite assurances given by the U.S. upon the unification of Germany that this would not happen. Defense contractors like Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, and Raytheon are making billions selling weapons to countries

in Eastern Europe. And they lobby incessantly for these kind of increases, in Washington, in NATO headquarters, and in Europe.

Increased spending on weapons—Congress recently approved nearly \$800 billion in defense spending for 2020—means there will be little money left over for programs like Medicare-for-all, green new deal, or free college. All of this creates an existential peril because we are risking nuclear accidents and the threat of war. The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists has placed us two minutes before midnight on the Doomsday Clock.

The Russiagate scam has also served the interests of another major corporate sponsor of establishment news: Big Pharma and the insurance industry. Few may even remember that in 2016 the Democratic National Committee, flush with donations from the for-profit health industry, rigged the primary election to prevent the nomination of a “socialist” who promised to enact Medicare-for-all, something favored by a vast majority of Americans but vehemently opposed by corporate donors. Had Sanders not been kneecapped by the DNC, he might have won the nomination and defeated Trump. But blaming the Russians for Trump's election helps us forget the role corporations play in undermining our democracy.

Public radio and TV are not the answer. Despite noble intentions to provide a voice for groups in the community that may otherwise be unheard, Congress rejected calls to provide forward funding to protect public broadcasting from political influence, and instead chose to control the purse strings to keep public broadcasters on a tight leash. Today, PBS and NPR rely more and more on corporate and billionaire cash to operate and filter what they play on their airwaves, so that they don't anger their wealthy backers.

So what does this have to do with the *Reader*? Alternative weeklies like the *Reader* are supported by the arts and by civic-minded individuals. These publications have a history of providing a home for journalists who tell truth to power.

Investigative journalists who expose government or corporate crimes often cannot find a home in the corporate press. A recently leaked memo exposed an actual policy at the *Washington Post* that prohibited its employees from criticizing the *Post's* advertisers or partners on social media. Julian Assange faces decades in prison primarily because he published truthful information about government crimes, the number one job of a free press. Yet, almost no one in the corporate press dares to speak out against this grave threat to press freedom.

The *Reader* has provided a home to a long list of truth tellers who took on powerful interests. John Conroy helped expose the use of torture by Chicago police commander Jon Burge and his detectives. Mick Dumke and Ben Joravsky helped expose how TIF money, earmarked for poor neighborhoods, was being used for rich ones. Steve Bogira wrote powerful pieces highlighting inhumanity and neglect in public housing on Chicago's south side.

I am not suggesting that the *Reader* alone will save journalism. But there aren't many viable alternatives to the corporate press and we ought to preserve them if we can. Besides, without the *Reader*, Black Sabbath might come through town on another farewell tour and I might never hear about it. ☒

Leonard C. Goodman is a Chicago criminal defense attorney and co-owner of the newly independent *Reader*.

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OPINION

SAVAGE LOVE

My best friend's father likes young boy models

Advice on what to do if you suspect someone's sexually attracted to children

By **DAN SAVAGE**

Q: My best friend's father is retired and spends most of his day posting memes on Facebook and Instagram. Recently, I realized he might not know how Instagram works. I noticed over the past week that he has been following, liking, and commenting on a lot of Instagram pictures of young gay men. I don't think he realizes that anyone who follows him can see that activity. At first I was worried, not because he might be gay or bisexual, but because he may still be "in the closet." He's married and to my knowledge, if he is bisexual or gay, nobody knows. I thought about warning him that his activity is public, but then I saw more. Not only has he been liking pictures of younger-looking men, he's also been liking and following accounts of very young boy models. Underage boys. I don't want to jump to conclusions, but the evidence is there. So now I've gone from wanting to warn this guy that he may be accidentally outing himself by not knowing how apps work to feeling morally obligated to tell my friend that his dad is into dudes and might be a pedophile. I can only imagine the ramifications this news would have on him and his family. —**BEST FRIEND'S DAD**

A: "I know many people wonder what to do if they suspect someone is sexually attracted to children," said Dr. Michael Seto, director of forensic rehabilitation research at the Royal Ottawa Health Care Group and an expert on

pedophilia and sexual offending.

But before we discuss your options and responsibilities here, BFD, let's get our terms straight: if by "young boy models" you mean teenage boys past puberty but under the age of consent, then your friend's father's behavior is icky and inappropriate—but it is not, by itself, evidence that he's a pedophile.

"Clinically, pedophilia refers to attraction to prepubescent children," said Dr. Seto, "though I know it's still commonly used in public to refer to attraction to anyone underage."

Actually, the term "pedophile" gets tossed around so indiscriminately these days that some of my own readers have used it to describe people in their 40s or 50s who are attracted to (or fucking) grown men and women in their 20s and 30s. For the record: An attraction to younger/youngish adults does not make someone a pedophile.

Dr. Seto estimates that just 1 percent of men are in fact attracted to prepubescent children. So depending on your point of view, pedophilia is either exceedingly rare or alarmingly common.

"Attraction to underage teens—boys or girls—is more common," said Dr. Seto, "though it's hard to estimate how common because it's a taboo subject. We get hints from the popularity of certain porn genres like 'schoolgirl,' 'twink,' 'barely legal,' and so on. We also have a hint from how so many fashion models begin working in their teens."

But Dr. Seto emphasizes that sexual attraction does not equal sexual behavior.

"The Instagram follows and likes may indeed suggest an attraction to underage boys," said Dr. Seto. "And it may even be pedophilia if the models are that young. But that doesn't mean his friend's father is going to do anything beyond following or liking."

Understanding what separates pedophiles who've sexually abused children from pedophiles who've never inappropriately touched a child is an important focus of Dr. Seto's research, BFD, and his insights could inform your course of action.

"One thing we know is that people who are low in self-control are more likely to act on sexual as well as nonsexual impulses," said Dr. Seto. "That low self-control shows up in other ways, including addictions, problems holding down a job, problems in adult relationships, unreliability, and criminal behavior. My hypothesis is that someone who doesn't show these signs is unlikely to offend against



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a child. They might look at child pornography, though, which is illegal and problematic, or they might look at legal images of children—like on social media—as a sexual outlet.”

Viewing child pornography is *hugely problematic* because it creates demand for more child pornography, which leads to more children being abused. But even if no new child porn were ever created, sharing images of the rape of a child is itself a violation of that child. And while it may not be pleasant to contemplate what might be going through a pedophile’s mind when they look at innocent images of children, it’s not against the law for someone with a sexual interest in children to dink around on Instagram.

“I’m required by law and professional ethics to report [someone] if I believe an identifiable child is at imminent risk,” said Dr. Seto. “This mandatory reporting requirement is NOT triggered simply by knowing whether someone is sexually attracted to children. Instead, I have to consider information like whether the person has ever expressed fantasies or urges about a specific child, whether they work with children regularly, whether they live with children who are in their attraction category, or whether they have ever engaged in suspicious behavior like direct messaging with a child.”

Does your friend’s dad work with underage boys? Does he sometimes look after underage boys—say, grandsons? Do they have sleepovers with friends at grandpa’s house? Has he ever behaved in an inappropriate manner around underage boys—e.g., inventing reasons to be alone with them, offering them booze or drugs, or making suggestive comments offline or online?

You’re in an agonizing position, BFD. You essentially have to weigh the chance that your friend’s dad would harm a child against the near certainty that telling your friend about his father’s behavior would do irrevocable harm to their relationship.

In your shoes, I would err on the side of protecting even a hypothetical child. I would say something to the dad, perhaps via direct message (or anonymously), and I would also say something to my friend. But I would emphasize what the best available research tells us about pedophilia: It’s not something a person chooses, and most pedophiles never sexually abuse children. (And not everyone who sexually abuses a child is a pedophile.) So even if your best friend’s father is attracted to prepubescent boys, that doesn’t mean he would ever harm a child. Being held accountable by loved ones is one way pedophiles avoid offending. 

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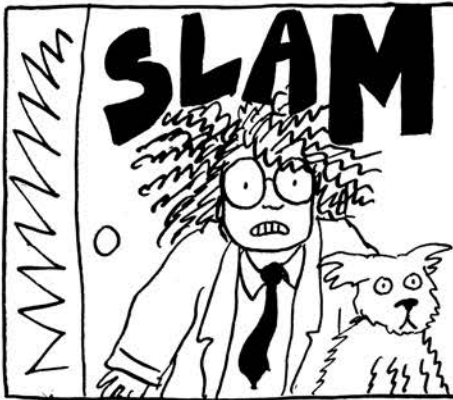
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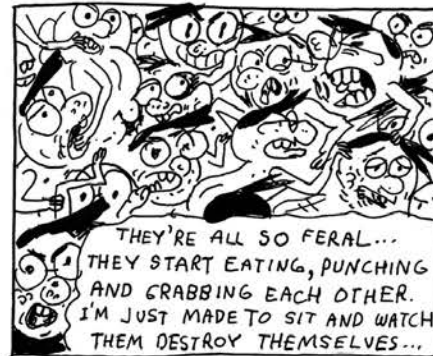


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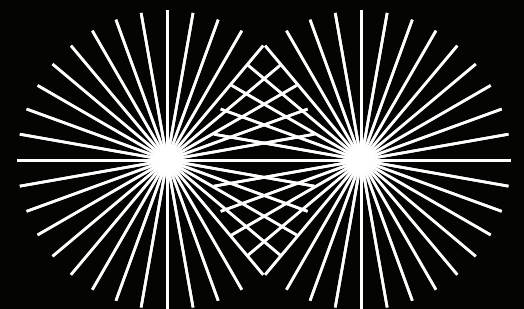


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